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MANUAL

OF THE

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

SOLD BY

SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF IRELAND,

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

23, Upr. O'Connell Street,

DUBLIN.

This original work in French has received in 1859 the IMPRIMATUR *of his Lordship the Archbishop of Paris.*

IMPRIMATUR :

Z. LIÉNARD, Vic. Gen.

Atrebati, die 25 Septembris 1895.

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OF THE

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

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APPROBATION

OF

MONSEIGNEUR THE ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS.

François-Nicolas-Madeleine Morlot, by the divine mercy and favour of the Holy Apostolic See, Cardinal Priest of the Holy Roman Church, under the title of SS. Nereus and Achille, Archbishop of Paris.

We approved and approve by these presents of the *Manual of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.*

We desire that this *Manual* may serve to make known and to extend more and more, this pious and charitable Society.

Given at Paris, under the signature of our Vicar-General, the seal of our arms, and the counter-signature of our Secretary.

May 1st 1861.

BUQUET,

VICAR-GENERAL.

By command of Monseigneur the Archbishop.

PREFACE.

According as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has been developed, and, in course of time, has seen its operation extended, the *Manual* has received numerous additions designed to recall the most important events of its history or to recommend works of which the utility became more evident.

The advantages of these additions have been counterbalanced by some inconveniences and the *Manual* has lost something of its character in becoming a work of extended scope. Thus in many countries, the idea has arisen of publishing *Abridgements* of it.

It has seemed well to take note of this tendency, which might also involve inconveniences and lead to regrettable suppressions. A careful revision has shown that a certain number of documents might be omitted and the size of the *Manual* sensibly reduced, without depriving it of its former appearance and

even less of its pratical usefulness. As a result, the division into two parts was useless, and the *Manual*, in a single volume, became once again, as its title literally signified, a handy book.

Although some slight modifications have been made in the body of the work, no change has been made in the order in which the General Rule, and its two supplements, the Rules for Superior and Central Councils have hitherto been published.

Copies of the first edition will be kept at the Offices of the Society, in sufficient number to meet the demands of those of our Brothers who may desire to procure it.

August 1888.

MANUAL

OF THE

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

INTRODUCTION

April 1851.

Eighteen years have elapsed since the first Conference of St. Vincent de Paul was established to visit the poor, and practice, to the extent of its resources, works of mercy. Since then, this Association, though humble and obscure in its origin, has not ceased to obtain the blessing of God; and to prosper by the help of charity and the protection of the Church. From Paris, its birth-place, it spread over the kingdom; from France it passed to other countries; and, at present, in distant lands, amid customs, nationalities, tongues, all varying the one from the other, its numerous members are everywhere seen imitating, with equal ardour, the admirable example of our

illustrious patron, devoting, in the name of Jesus Christ, a portion of their time to the service of the poor, blending temporal almsgiving with pious exhortation, and aiming to regenerate the soul, by recalling to the Christian his sublime destiny.

This period of eighteen years was not, therefore, a time of barrenness, but filled with good works and many happy results; and, in order to continue those works, and render permanent these results, certain traditions have been established, several rules adopted. But it must not be supposed that, in the career of charity, the path is ever smooth or free from obstacles; that in it, as in all other undertakings in this world, experience is not bought at the expense of time and of reverses. Such being the fact, is it not therefore prudent to pause, from time to time, and, before starting off anew, carefully to review the past?

And, in fact, already, on several occasions, as exigencies required, has this course been followed; and always with profitable results. In this way, our Rules, the fruit of long experience, were gradually formed and committed to writing; circulars came to be issued to inform the neophytes of the Society of what their predecessors had accomplished, and recall to the elder members the principles which they had themselves laid down, and which it was most important not to depart from; whilst at a subsequent period, as these desultory communications were insufficient to keep pace

with the wants created by the rapid multiplication of Conferences, general annual reports, embodying the humble but consoling results which love of the poor, and zeal for the salvation of souls had produced in the Society, came to be published. Through the blessing of God, these publications, we may be allowed to say, have not been useless : for they have taught us to appreciate the value of works wrought together, quickened our interest in them, and stimulated their increase; they have fostered one uniform spirit in all the Conferences, and produced, throughout the Society, that sort of kindred likeness which an identity of faith and the continual influence of the same views, the same hopes, the same principles ever engender.

But what sufficed for the past is inadequate to present requirement. An eighteen years existence has wrought many changes in our organization ; the future probably bears yet more in its womb. It is, therefore, no longer possible to remain such as we were and content ourselves with oral regulations ; or even with our former occasional publications, sent forth, either to recall important facts in our history, or to guide our steps aright, by solving various problems as they arose. Unconnected with each other, either in their subjects, or by the occasions which called them forth, those publications would soon be forgotten, if pains were not taken to collect them, to gather them in

a bundle and thus to place in the hands of all, the summary of our modest archives.

These considerations induced the Council-General to issue the present compilation, under the title of *Manual of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.* It embraces *the Rules—Regulations to be observed in the formation of new Conferences—Extracts from the letters of the Presidents and Secretaries of the Council-General*—and, *a historical summary of our works.*

This collection will thus place before the eyes of our associates, a picture of the daily occupations and life of our Conferences, recall many useful precedents and decisions, founded on past experience, which might otherwise be buried in the passing years. It will likewise prevent discussions, in our meetings, which might otherwise usurp the time dedicated to the practice of charity, and show any persons, that may interest themselves in our affairs, what we have been, what we now are and desire ever to remain. We trust this short treatise may truly deserve the title of *Manual,* and prove a useful and frequent pocket-companion, either for the purposes of piety, or for the study of our principles and our spirit.

Many important and practical results will, the Council-General trusts, accrue from this work: but there is one which should, above others, be produced by it; which alone would amply repay the labour it has cost;—we mean a clear, distinct

impression, upon each member, of the spirit, the object, the tendencies of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. In fact, is not the spirit of a charitable society its very life, its inmost element, and that to which, above all, it should cling? Should not this spirit be constantly studied by him who truly desires to fulfil its duties? Can the spirit of a charitable society ever be forgotten, without entailing degeneracy, disorganization, and even annihilation?

The spirit of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul is mirrored in every page of this book; but this point strikes us so forcibly that we deem it indispensable to add some further observations.

It would be a very false idea of the spirit which inspired the birth of our Society, to suppose that, from its first beginning, the future to which God destined it was at all foreseen. Those among us who first entered our family and remember its origin, know, on the contrary, that such a thought was far from our expectations, and even from our design. Assuredly, no one looked forward to an institution, embracing a great number of persons, commanding vast resources, propagating itself in the most different localities, attracting everywhere the sympathies of the public and the solemn benedictions of the Church. But one thing was certain—that almsgiving is an imperative duty upon Christians, and that, by ceasing to be merciful, they fly from the precepts of the Gospel. This

again was certain : that if the precept is fulfilled by entrusting to intelligent hands the alms one is bound to bestow, there are, likewise, special graces attached even to that very distribution. It was remembered, how often Jesus Christ exhorted his disciples to assist the suffering, to visit the sick, to console the afflicted ; and, rigidly discarding every political bias, we desired to follow these counsels, in order, thereby, to claim the reward promised by our Lord. This we sought ; this was our ruling idea ; and for a long time, things went no further. If, later, success transcended our hopes, if public confidence increased our resources,—for a long time so limited—our fundamental character still remained the same, and we continued essentially a Christian Brotherhood, desirous of aiding the poor that we might gain the merits attached to this pious work of assuaging misery, that we might, in the words of a celebrated preacher, place *our chastity under the protection of our charity.*

This primitive, fundamental character of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul undoubtedly constitutes its strength, and caused its rapid expansion. Oftentimes, in fact, when a few Christians had endeavoured to assemble in a quiet way, under the peaceful banner of our holy Patron, it happened that many good people became alarmed, and forthwith magnified the new comers into rivals of preexisting institutions : of the Sisters

of Charity, the Clergy, or official eleemosynary establishments. The poor, it would be said, are already abundantly provided for; to do more, is not advisable, but rather encourages laziness; and if no real good is accomplished, why lavish resources, at the risk of introducing confusion where economy and order now prevail? With such greetings have new Conferences sometimes been received;—particularly in places where the more hideous phases of poverty were rarely seen—and, possibly, there may be a shadow of truth in these objections. But if in visiting the poor we aim chiefly at benefiting ourselves; if we extend our charity to every kind of misfortune, only when a real want does exist, and our interference seems called for, such objections lose their force; and those who, in the first instance, feared us as rivals, soon learn to esteem us as welcome auxiliaries. For it must be a source of real joy to those who desire that practical piety should flourish, to see men of every rank and condition and age, and shade of opinion, united by Catholicity, enlist in the sacred cause of charity; mount to the garrets of the poor, to solace their miseries, and return with souls quickened to compassion by the sight of human wretchedness; thus taking their share in the ever difficult task of reconciling the poor with the rich, the unfortunate with those who are accounted happy in this world.

A second distinctive characteristic of the

Society of St. Vincent de Paul, is a frank, Christian cordiality between its members. When our Society was limited in numbers, and our meetings were social gatherings in which personal acquaintance banished all formal restraint, Conference-day was held as a day of rejoicing; for it united, in familiar intercourse, friends whom the labours of the week had separated: even now, although it has become more numerous, and persons of every social position have joined our ranks, and men of mature years flocked to assist us with their experience, the same feelings continue to exist. Without knowing each other, we are yet friends; without coming into personal contact, we yet readily understand each other: for we are unanimous in what Bossuet terms *the ruling affair of life* — the affair of salvation, as well for our neighbours as for ourselves personally.

A reciprocal confidence, a christian fraternity, are, then, our sole bonds of union; and if amongs us, the neophytes seek instruction in the practice of common works from those whose longer membership has given them experience; if the latter offer advice and their suggestions are heeded or adopted; if, finally, to further our common interests, a Council, ready to serve all, is established, it is because unanimity exists in the Society, and no one wishes to over-rule. *Cor unum et anima una.*

Love and peace are two blessings which we endeavour to preserve amidst us; and, if we enjoy them ourselves, should we not attempt to diffuse them;—especially among the poor, whose troubles we endeavour to assuage, whose miseries we try to alleviate? Who, in fact, is not aware that physical want is, often, the least of their misfortunes? The old man alone in the world, the orphan child may, no doubt, suffer from cold and hunger; and yet, of other evils, these may possibly be the least dreaded: for public commiseration may readily come to their assistance. But that which afflicts them is, that no friendly hand ever presses theirs, no kind heart shares the burden of their sorrows; and hence, their thoughts revolve in melancholy solitude. Here, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul endeavours to fill up the chasm. Its members go forth among the poor, not simply to dispense material help; but, with a tender heart, from which, through the grace of Jesus Christ, flow words of consolation, which are truly gifts *of the best kind*, they practically convince the poor man that he is not only commiserated and assisted, but beloved. It is the part of the Vincentian Brother to pay not merely a flying visit to the abode of the indigent, but to enter leisurely; to seat himself on, perhaps, the only chair the room contains to listen to his tale of misfortunes; to encourage the disclosure of some soul-oppressing secret; to mingle tears with

tears; and thus, by gentle patience and kind demeanour to gradually implant in that withered heart feelings of gratitude for their friendship towards him. Oftentimes the poor are unbelievers; oftentimes ignorant. They know not that this life of sorrow and expiation is followed by eternity; that in heaven reigns a merciful and indulgent God, who chastises his children only for their trial and improvement, and who, for sufferings patiently borne in this world, promises an incommensurate and everlasting recompense. Uninstructed in these truths, the poor, instead of uniting their sufferings with those of a Saviour God; instead of making them, after the example of so many Christians, a cause of hope and a source of merit, blaspheme Divine Providence, curse the day on which they were born, and give themselves up to despair. How useful to a soul in such a state, may not the Society of St. Vincent de Paul become! By revealing to the unhappy man his immortal destiny, by displaying, before him, infinite felicity, as the immense compensation for transitory evils, his heart may be awakened to hope; thus is presented to the world that admirable, and yet not unfrequent spectacle, of poverty borne with cheerfulness and dignity, nay with joy; and hailed, as a precious title of fellowship with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It is thus that the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul have ever understood the duty of visiting

the poor; and most happy results have flowed from this view. In fact, how little can we do, at best, towards alleviating the material wants of the poor! — how little towards assuaging hunger and clothing nakedness? Scarce two pounds a-year can we give, even to large families completely destitute. We are, therefore, in this respect necessarily restricted by our limited resources: but when we have to bestow spiritual alms upon the poor, then, indeed, is our treasury inexhaustible, because we command the very graces of God himself; them may we lavish as we list, without restraint. Contrast the moral condition of two families, from whom the goods of this world have been equally withheld; the one having lost the precious germ of faith, whilst the other bas carefully nurtured it. Examine their countenances, their appearance; listen to their complaints. Gather the sum of joys and sorrows meted out to each, and it will easily be seen, that whilst, with the former, irreligion adds but to the tortures of despair, faith elevates and cheers the latter, and infuses a calm serenity throughout the family circle.

Let us therefore never depart from our customs in this most essential point; let us preserve our Rules, and, as has already been said, our Rules will preserve us.

In reviewing the long and varied series of pious works, undertaken by the Conferences of St. Vincent of Paul, it will readily be perceived that the

force of circumstances, and the necessity of keeping pace in our efforts, with evils as they arose, gradually formed that link of charity which, extending its hand to man in his cradle, only relaxes its friendly grasp, when the tomb closes over his remains. This reveals another, and a striking trait of our Society. No good work is alien to it, as has often been repeated; for we are not circumscribed by any previously determined boundary, which it is inexpedient to exceed. But if, in acting thus, we yield to the pious exigencies of charity, we are not the less anxious to conform to the rules of Christian prudence. Our pious industry covers a wide range indeed: but then, have we not been eighteen years in existence? We embrace within our scope the whole course of human life; but throughout our long contact with the poor, we have been driven, as it were, from one thing to another;—from domiciliary visits to attending the sick; to the care of apprentices; to the formation of circulating libraries; to the publication of almanacs and pious readings—so that our various works were all developed, little by little, without previous design, and, almost in spite of ourselves. As a reward of our unwillingness to *outstrip Providence,* to borrow our holy patron's expression, it has happened with us, as with him, that an apparently feeble germ has produced abundant and unexpected fruits. This progress,

of which the *Manual,* in every page, shows the traces, deserves frequent, and serious meditation. Works of charity should ever progress; but should, also, bide their proper time. When, eager for success, we attempt to accomplish everything at once, we run the risk of compromising the good already done, for an improvement, oftentimes problematical; and assume a grave responsibility, if the results equal not our expectations. Let us continue to shun such dangers; let us push on, and develop our humble labours; let every year witness the budding of some new idea among us, some fresh improvement: and thus shall we shield ourselves against apathy which, so easily, contents itself with what is already done. Let us, at the same time, advance step by step; and guided by experience, undertake only such things as have been long, and carefully considered. Works founded in the spirit of religion bear their proper fruits only in the course of time: for, by a merciful dispensation of Providence, they participate in the wonderful fecundity of the patience of God who hastens not His acts, because He is eternal. *Patiens quia æternus.*

Many other characteristics, inherent in our Conferences, might be pointed out: but we will conclude by citing one, which alone will suffice, as summing up several others; we allude to Christian simplicity, or rather, humility.

If we consider how little we really do, it will

not, perhaps, be difficult to remain faithful to this virtue; for, although our Society may have greatly increased within a few years, aided a great number of poor, and guided numerous apprentices, still, what are we, what can we ever be, but obscure and defective instruments of that Providence, who deigns to use us, in spite of our unworthiness? However, as the inclination which leads the human mind to vanity, is, at all times, strong and insinuating, we should endeavour to perpetuate those practices which have, thus far, held in check, amongst us, this fatal tendency. Unknown, in our early days, to the world, for a long time we sought to remain in the same obscurity; and not only was it contrary to our custom to make known to the public the alms we distributed to the poor, to issue reports or monetary statements, but we even hesitated about soliciting alms beyond the circle of our intimate acquaintances. Subsequently, that which was previously unadvisable, became just, and opportune; and then, through the eloquent voices of others, we implored, in behalf of our poor, the pity of the faithful. This, as a necessary consequence, exacted the publication of statements, to place before the eyes of all, the uses to which the means, confided to our care, had been dedicated; and finally, more detailed reports were drawn up, to show the object of our meetings and attract to them those already inclined by the sympathies of

their hearts and the ardour of their faith. But if, apparently, some new practices have been introduced into our Society, its foundation ever remains untouched. Thus, it has always been understood that, if we are constrained to address the public, it should be in favour of our poor and not of ourselves; that, if we have to speak of our works, we should always be silent about ourselves; and finally, that, if by this publicity we may enable persons, desirous of studying our organisation, to become acquainted with its details, we should not, under any pretext, seek to attract towards ourselves, an attention not intended for us.

Such, in these matters, has been our constant tradition; such is the purpose of the numerous documents embraced in this Manual; such the spirit in which its publication was undertaken. What virtue, in fact, is more necessary to a Christian association, than humility? Does it not, by inspiring self-renouncement and checking opinionativeness, render our meetings peaceful and friendly; does it not banish from them that most terrible calamity, susceptibilities of self-love and personal discussions? Does it not teach us never to desire the first place among our associates; to accept dignity only as a burthen, *onus non munus;* and thus prevent a few from absorbing the work destined for all? Does it not, in fine, draw upon those associations which practice it, the abundant blessing of God, since it inspires every one of

them to refer to Him, at all times and every where, the good that is done, and of which He is, in reality, the sole author? Happy the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, if, through the protection of their holy patron, they faithfully cultivate this virtue!

Such, briefly traced, is the path which the Conferences of St. Vincent of Paul have endeavoured to follow; and the preceding considerations must convince those who have pondered attentively over the life of our illustrious patron, that these traditions,—to which we owe all that we are—are simply a summary of his maxims. The world, indeed, regards St. Vincent de Paul merely as one of the benefactors of humanity; honours him as the founder of useful institutions: those, on the other hand, who have meditated on his life, closely studied his actions, and dived into the recess of his thoughts, well know that, if he deserved the glorious title of *Father of the Poor*, it was only because he had learned to love them, in loving Jesus Christ. If he lavished upon the poor his anxious care, and in such a way as to elevate, not to humble, it was because he honoured them as the images and members of his own Divine Master. If, for the purposes of charity, he established numerous Confraternities of ladies, instituted the Congregation of the Mission, and the Sisters of Charity; if he evangelized, at the same time, his own country, and distant lands; if he

contributed to give to the Church of France that great renown which it has enjoyed for two centuries, and possesses even now, it was because he looked upon himself as a docile instrument of Providence, whom he strove rather to obey than to outstrip. He ever preferred to see good accomplished through others, rather than through himself, and never personally interfered, save when other evangelical workers were wanting : and after having labored, even *until his limbs were wearied and the sweat trickled from his brow,* his deep humility caused him to regard, as nothing, all that he had done, and to view himself as a useless servant. These things are known to those who have studied the life of this illustrious Saint ; and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has endeavoured constantly to remember them. Assuredly, we feel, we know, how lamentably far short we are from his standard : we have not the same faith, nor the same confidence in God, nor the same zeal, nor, all combined have we distributed such abundant relief as this charitable servant of the poor himself dispensed : but, notwithstanding our great inferiority, we do not the less desire to follow after his footsteps, to regulate ourselves by his example, and obey his maxims ; because we are persuaded that, in thus acting, we conform ourselves, according to the measure of our limited powers, to the precepts of Him who is *the way, the truth, and the life.*

RULES

WITH

EXPLANATORY NOTES

December 1835

We are now entering upon that formal organization we have long wished for. It has been delayed, for our association has already existed some years. But were we not bound to ascertain that God wished it should continue, before determining the form which it should assume? Was it not necessary that it should be well established,—that it should know what Heaven required of it,—that it should judge what it could do by what it had done, before framing its rules and prescribing its duties? Now we have only to embody, as it were, in Regulations, usages already followed and cherished;—and this is a guarantee that our rules will be well received by all, and not be forgotten.

Our little association for a time bore the name of *Conference of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul*, because this was the name under which it was commenced and in order that we might not forget the circumstances of its origin, which no one

in particular can attribute to himself. Some among us, whilst devoting ourselves to the defence of the dogmas of religion, in the then very stormy discussions of literary societies, thought that it was not enough to speak, that we should also act: hence came the works of charity to which they devoted themselves—hence the *Conference of Charity*.

Having become numerous, and being obliged to divide into sections,—moreover, many of us desiring to meet together in other towns, where we were to reside thenceforth, the name of *Conference* has continued to be applied to each of those sections, all of which are comprised under the common denomination of the *Society of St. Vincent de Paul*.

We must ever avoid giving to our undertaking the name of any particular member, whatever may have been his individual services, or of the places in which we assemble, for fear we may accustom ourselves to look upon it as the work of man. Christian works belong to God alone, the sole author of all good.

Our association originated in religious motives: we must, therefore, look for the rules of our conduct nowhere but in the spirit of religion—in the examples and words of our Saviour—in the instructions of the Church—in the lives of the saints. Such are the reasons why we are placed under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Vincent de Paul, to whom we owe peculiar devotion, whose footsteps we must sedulously endeavour to follow.

It pleased Jesus Christ first to practice that which afterwards He was to teach mankind; *cœpit facere et docere.* We are desirous of imitating that divine model so far as our weakness will allow.

The object then of this *Conference* is, firstly, to maintain its members, by mutual example, in the practice of a Christian life; secondly, to visit the poor at their dwellings, to carry them succour in kind, to afford them, also, religious consolations, remembering these words of our Master: *Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei;* thirdly, to apply ourselves, according to our capabilities and the time which we can spare, to the elementary and Christian intruction of poor children, whether free or imprisoned, seeing that what we may do for the least among our brethren, Jesus Christ has promised that He will accept as done to Himself; fourthly, to distribute moral and religious books; fifthly, to be willing to undertake any other sort of charitable work to which our resources may be adequate, and which will not thwart the chief end of the Society, and for which it may demand our co-operation upon the proposal of its leaders.

The Society of Charity is composed of active members, and of others who cannot devote themselves to the works in which it is engaged. The members of this latter class assist the former by their efforts and by their influence: by their offering and their prayers they supply the absence of that actual co-operation which they are obliged to forego.

The Society of Charity should endeavour to attain and practice every virtue ; there are, however, some virtues which are more essentially necessary to them, for the due discharge of the charitable duties to which they devote themselves. Among these are self-denial, Christian prudence, the active love of our neighbour, zeal for the salvation of souls, meekness in heart and word, and above all, the spirit of brotherly charity. They ought, therefore, to meditate on those maxims of the Gospel which recommend these virtues, and should make them the rule of their lives. It is for this purpose that these maxims are here detailed, and a development given to them applicable to our work.

1. By *self-denial* we should understand the surrendering of our own opinion, without which surrender no association is durable. The man who is in love with his own ideas wil disdain the opinion of others ; contempt for our brethren, far from uniting, engenders division. We should, therefore, willingly acquiesce in the judgment of others, and should not feel annoyed if our own propositions be not accepted by them. Our mutual good-will should proceed from the heart, and should be without bounds. We should equally avoid all spirit of contention with the poor, and we must not consider ourselves offended if they do not yield implicitly to our advice ; we should not attempt to make them receive it as from authority and by command—we should content ourselves with proposing what is good, and zealously exhorting to its practice, leaving to God the

care of making our words bear fruit, if such be His will.

2. *Christian Prudence.*—Among the poor, there are some who have the happiness to be good Christians; others are careless, and some, perhaps, impious. We ought not to repulse them, even in this latter case; our language ought to vary according to the dispositions of those whom we address, remembering that Jesus Christ recommended His disciples to unite the wisdom of the serpent to the simplicity of the dove. Bounty opens the heart to confidence, and it is by charitable gifts that we prepare the way for spiritual benefits. St. Vincent de Paul often recommended not to try the latter until the former had been freely bestowed. Now the poor are of either sex. As the *Society of Charity* is chiefly composed of young men; they should never forget that their mission is not to such of the other sex as are young, lest they should meet with their own destruction, whilst desiring to promote the salvation of others; moreover, it is necessary to shun even the appearance of evil, and all which might scandalize the weak.

3. *Love of our neighbour, and zeal for the salvation of souls.*—This is the very essence of the *Conference of Charity.* He who is not animated by this twofold sentiment, which with the Christian forms but one feeling, should not become a member. We must never murmur at the labours, the fatigues, nor even at the repulses to which the exercise of charity may subject us. We expose ourselves to all these things, in associating for the

service of our neighbour. Neither should we regret the pecuniary sacrifices that we make to our work, esteeming ourselves happy in offering something to Jesus Christ in the person of the poor, and in being able to carry some relief to His suffering members. We should make these sacrifices with an entire absence of personal feeling. No member should consider that the poor adopted by him are entitled to peculiar advantages in the distribution of relief, merely because he may fancy that he has contributed more to the common fund than other members.

4. Our Divine Model was meek and humble of heart; "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart,"—*Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde;* and our patron, St. Vincent de Paul, prized nothing so highly as *meekness* and *humility*, which are inseparable. We should be kind and obliging to one another, and we should be equally so to the poor whom we visit. We can have no power over the mind, except through meekness, —*Beati mites quia possidebunt terram.* The spirit of humility and meekness is more particularly necessary in giving advice, and in exhorting others to fly from evil and to practice virtue. Without gentleness, zeal for the salvation of souls is a ship without sails.

5. It is *a brotherly spirit* which wil make our *Society of Charity* become beneficial to its members and edifyng to others. Faithful to the maxims of our divine Master and of His beloved disciple, let us love one another. We should love one another now and ever, far and near, from one

Conference to another, from town to town, from clime to clime. This love will render us able to bear with each other's failings. We shall never give credence to an evil report of a brother but with sorrow ; and when we cannot reject the evidence of facts, even then, in order to conform ourselves to the will of Him who has confided to each one the care of his neighbour—*Unicuique mandavit Deus de proximo suo*—then, in a spirit of charity, and with all the earnestness of sincere friendship, we will ourselves counsel our falling, or fallen brother, or cause advice to be conveyed to him ; we will endeavour to strengthen him in virtue, or raise him from his fall. If any member of the Conference should fall ill, his brethren will visit him, will tend him, if it be necessary, will assuage the irksomeness of his convalescence; if his malady be dangerous, they should take the utmost care that he receives the Sacraments. In a word, the troubles and the joys of each of us shall be shared by all, in accordance with the advice of the apostle, who tells us to weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice.

The unanimity among the members of the *Conference of Charity* of St. Vincent de Paul will be cited as a model of Christian friendship—of a friendship stronger than death, for we will often remember in our prayers to God the brethren whom we have lost.

This sentiment, which, with us, will make of all our hearts one heart, of all our souls one soul,—*Cor unum, et anima una*,—will endear to each of us our little fraternal association; we shall

bless it for the good, however trivial, it enables us to perform. We shall love this brotherhood with tenderness, and even with a greater affection than any other similar work ; not because of its excellence, or from pride, but as dutiful children love a poor and deformed mother more than all other women, however remarkable they may be for their riches and for their attractions.

Some other consequences of the foregoing maxims :—

One of the vices most opposed to charity and Christian humility is envy. We will avoid it, not only amongst ourselves, but also in reference to other societies, whose object, like our own, is to succour our neighbour. We will ardently desire, and wil behold with pleasure, their prosperity, and the good they accomplish ; we will rejoice if new brethren join us, if existing societies unite themselves to ours, since greater good will spring from the union ; but we will see without jealousy our Christian friends devoting themselves to other good works, and other societies doing God's work in their own manner, and independently of us. We should have but one desire,—to see every one devote himself to do good, and to succour those who suffer: *Quis tribuat ut omnis populus prophetet?* Nay more, although we may be fonder of our little association, we will always consider it as less excellent than others ; we will regard it, as in fact it is, but as a work formed nobody knows by whom, nor how,—born yesterday, and which may die to-morrow.

The same spirit will ever induce us individually to wish the offices of the Society confided to others rather than to ourselves.

We will always remember that we are only laymen, and for the most part young men, without any mission to teach others. For this, and every other reason, we will pay the utmost deference to the counsels which may be given to us by the Society or its heads; we will, above all, follow with docility the course which the ecclesiastical superiors think proper to point out to us. St. Vincent de Paul wished that his disciples should not undertake any good work without having first secured the assent and received the benediction of the local Pastors. No more will we ever undertake any new and important work within an ecclesiastical jurisdiction, without consulting him who is invested with it. We will do nothing in opposition to spiritual authority, considering as an evil the good which we would attempt contrary to his opinion. We will extend, to a certain degree, this deference to the Sisters of Charity, or even to laymen who may have offices of charity to perform towards those whom we also desire to succour, esteeming it an honour to be considered the least among our brethren, and to be no more than servants and instruments of others in regard to the poor. Lastly, among ourselves the younger will defer to the elder, and the newly admitted members to those who are of longer standing.

We are the dispensers of the gifts of God, who is the common Father of mankind, and makes His sun shine upon all. Our love of our neighbour,

then, will be without respect of persons. The title of the poor to our commiseration will be their poverty itself. We will not inquire whether they belong to any party, or sect, in particular. Jesus Christ came to redeem and save all men, the Greeks as well as Jews, barbarians as well as Romans. We will not discriminate more than did He between those whom suffering and misery have visited. Nevertheless, St. Paul recommends to Christians to assist, in the first place, their brethren in the faith: *ad domesticos fidei.* We, therefore, should testify a special interest in those poor, who have the happiness of being good Christians, and who honour that title by the virtues which religion incultates.

The spirit of charity, together with Christian prudence, will further induce us to banish political discussions for ever from our meetings, as well general as ordinary. St. Vincent de Paul would not allow his ecclesiastics even to converse upon those differences which arm Princes against each other, or upon the motives of rivalry which estrange nations. With more reason, those who wish to be of one mind, and to exercise a ministry of charity, should abstain from being inflamed by political leanings which array parties in opposition, and from starting, amongst themselves, those irritating questions which divide mankind. Our Society is all charity: politics are wholly foreign to it.

Another efficacious means of maintaining unity amongst us, and of cementing the Christian friendship of which it is the foundation and the charm,

is to present for admission into the Society only such candidates as are worthy of the confidence and affection of our brothers. It might be an advantage for some persons to participate in our charitable work ; but perhaps, it might not be an advantage for the Society to count them amongst its members. Previous, therefore, to the enrolment of any friend into our ranks, we will carefully inquire whether he be calculated to draw closer those ties which bind us to each other ; whether the amenity of his disposition and his Christian demeanour will enhance the value of the small relief which he will be commissionned to carry to the distressed ; whether the firmness of his character authorizes us to hope that he will persevere in his generous resolutions.

The choice of new members is of the utmost importance. Defections we have already had to lament—others are going on even now : there will be some always :—such is human weakness. Yet the Society will inspire some confidence,—will be efficient for some good, only so far as its members will prove its worth by their entire conduct, and particularly by their perseverance in the acts of charity to which they devote themselves.

Another point no less worthy of our consideration is the discretion which should accompany zeal for the salvation of souls. All fervour is not holy, nor accepted by God. All times are not suitable for instilling new and Christian teaching into the heart. We must know how to wait for God's own time, and to be patient as He is. Often we must wait entire weeks before we are able to

inculcate, with effect, even one moral and edifying maxim. Above all, we must never be importunate upon this point. We are not commissioned to perform the good which it is out of our power to effect. On the other hand, the apparently trifling results of our mission must not discourage us. Perhaps the Almighty wills not that we ourselves should witness the happy results which our efforts and our sacrifices may at last produce. Our charity would be less meritorious, and might expose us to vain glory, if we saw it always crowned with success.

Christian prudence should never abandon us in the ministrations which we fulfil towards the poor. Unfortunately, and especially in large towns, the poor sometimes try to conceal such resources as they may have, and thus draw to themselves that sympathy and those alms which should be shared with others. Therefore without arming ourselves with a distrust which might be unjust towards them, we must be circumspect. It is not wise to rely too implicitly upon their first statements.

We have, therefore, been accustomed, and we will continue, to seek information about our poor, from the Sisters of Charity, the parochial Clergy, and all other persons who may be able to give us correct information as to their state. We must be provident for the poor, who are seldom provident for themselves. If we wish to become their true benefactors, we will impress upon them that an existence sustained by the aid of charity is very precarious—we will induce them to exert themselves to earn their own livelihood— we will point

out to them sources of employment, and we will assist them to obtain it. If they are sick or unable to work, we will second their endeavour to obtain admission to the asylums established for the aged, the infirm, the sick.

In conclusion, we will never be ashamed of the smallness of our alms. That which is small in the estimation of the rich, is great in the eyes of those who possess nothing. The smallness of our alms is one of the conditions of our existence. We have no other ordinary resources but our own voluntary offerings; these will not be sufficient for considerable works of charity; but our tender interest—our very manner, will give to our alms a value which they do not possess in themselves.

We must now lay down some rules, and mention some practices we have been in the habit of following : other customs will, doubtless, be hereafter added—other rules will become necessary ; but the existing rules, and the customs in use will suffice to guide our future progress.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

UPON THE

ARTICLES

OF

THE GENERALE RULE

Article 1. — All Christian young men who desire to unite in a communion of prayers and a participation of the same works of charity, may become members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, wherever they may happen to reside.

This article, the object of which is to set forth the aim and the nature of the Society, contains many points of the highest importance.

Firstly, it recalls to mind that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has been founded by *young men and for them;* it is with a view of preserving them from the dangers of every kind that surround them at the commencement of their career, that Conferences have been organized; and if, at a later time, men of more advanced age have come to join themselves to them, and to bring to them the tribute of their experience, we should not be the less mindful

of the original aim of the Society, and we should seek, as much as possible, to attract to it young men, those especially who, far from their own families, have need of being surrounded by a pious circle to make them persevere in good. — *(Circular of 1st November,* 1851.)

It results, moreover, from this article, that the Conferences are intended for men only, that ladies cannot take part in them, either as active or as honorary members. By a natural consequence, the works of the ladies, although founded upon a rule analogous to that of the men, cannot be aggregated to the Society. Conferences may have charitable relations with them, may adopt the cases of the poor whom they recommend, and may recommend others to them in turn; but they must keep separate their government, their resources, their meetings. It will be seen further on that ladies can become benefactresses to the Society, and in that relation participate in numerous Indulgences.

The article adds that the members must be *Christians*, and the 18th article confirms it by adding that "each member should be careful not to introduce into the Society any one who will not edify his fellow-members or be edified by them. All should strive to love each other, and the poor like brothers". The Council-General, interpreting the rule, has always understood that this condition could not be considered as fulfilled but among men, Christians not only in feeling but in practice, fulfilling all the duties prescribed by the Church, and especially the Paschal duty. On this subject almost all the *Circulars* may be consulted, in particular those of the *14th July,* 1841, and of the *31st May,* 1846. Good sense, moreover, proves it in an evident manner. One of the aims of the Society being to make the poor better men and better Christians, how can any

one effect this if he is not so himself, and how can he inculcate duties which he does not discharge?

It is, also, to be remarked that the primary object which the Society proposes to its members, is their own edification. If they meet together, if they visit the poor, the first object is to make each other better *by a union in prayer.* The aim of the Conferences is not, then, philanthropy, the alleviation, very praiseworthy no doubt, but purely human, of the sufferings of the poor; their aims is zeal for the salvation of souls, and in particular for the souls of the members themselves. This is a point which must never be lost sight of, for numerous consequences spring from it, especially in the selection of the works to be undertaken by Conferences, which ought all to tend towards the sanctification of the members engaged in them.

Still if charitable works are not the primary object of the Society, they are the principal means made use of to attain that object. There are some associations which are conducive to the sanctification of those engaged in them, as pious congregations, by their frequent and prolonged prayers; there are others that strive to the same end by charitable exercises and by penance united to prayer, such as the Third Orders. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has not so high an aim; it does not aspire to be a congregation, a confraternity, a Third Order; it is no more than a pious assembly of Christians living in the world, and desiring to put their purity under the shelter of charity. To ask more for it, would be to pervert its character and its institution.

The Council-General has been consulted several times to know if it were expedient to admit as members persons who were not above want. It has always replied in the negative (*see the Circular of the 14th July,* 1841). Doubtless it is not necessary to be

favoured by fortune in order to take part in the Society. With regard to this, much consideration must be given to the locality in which the particular Conference accomplishes its works. For example : the conditions could not be absolutely the same in a poor country district as in a large city; but it is always of consequence that the member should be in a position to help the poor in some degree, however small, and should never have need to be himself assisted. Every one can comprehend the inconvenience which may arise from a contrary usage.

The last words of the article which occupies our attention, " wherever they may happen to reside, " add a new feature most essential to the Society, that is, its universality. Intimately united to the Church, its ambition is to serve it, everywhere and for ever, without distinction of race or of country, without difference of language or of government. If there be anything which can unite men by a bond at once the strongest and the purest, surely it is charity, that eternal delight of angels and of men, as St. Vincent de Paul called it.

2. — No work of charity should be regarded as foreign to the Society, although its special object is to visit poor families. Thus, its members are expected to embrace every opportunity of affording consolation to the sick and to prisoners, of instructing poor, unprotected, or imprisoned children, and of procuring the succours of religion for those who need them, at the hour of death.

In this is presented an application of the principle already referred to, namely, that the Society, above all things, aims at the sanctification of its members. If, in fact, visiting poor families is its most special,

indeed, its fundamental work, it is because that is the work which is the most conducive to the edification of the members, and that which is most within their reach. Undoubtedly, it is very meritorious to undertake the patronage of children, or to facilitate marriages among the poor; but the exercise of these works has not the same practical effect *upon the members* as visiting the poor in their garrets, their cellars, or their cabins. To undertake these works, it is necessary in some sort to have carried out the visiting of the poor; otherwise, insurmountable difficulties would arise in them, were it but those of inexperience alone, and members would get a distaste for these works, whether on account of being frustrated in them, or because too much time was absorbed in them. On the other hand, visiting the poor attaches you to it, captivates you, because it always produces immediate results, material relief; it is easily practised, and requires but little time. For all these reasons, it ought to be the favourite work of a society composed of men who live in the world, and are engaged in numerous occupations; and this is why the Circulars constantly recommend it.

It is well to remark, also, that, if no work of charity should be regarded as foreign to the Society, this expression is always to be understood with this reservation, *that the work should be suited to the special character of the Society.* Thus it has constantly been regarded as an imperative rule, not to undertake any work relating to females, particulary such as are young and live alone. The Society leaves the care of them, as well as the patronage of schools for young girls, to ladies associations, or to the indefatigable zeal of the clergy. Moreover when commencing new works, the rules of prudence should never be forgotten. It is most desirable that every Conference should exert itself to add some new work

to those already in operation; but in doing so, the step should be taken without precipitation, and when the necessary means exist. Our rule should be, neither lukewarmness nor rashness.

3. — When several members of the Society are found in any locality, they meet to encourage each other in the practice of virtue. This meeting is called a *Conference*, which was the name originally given to the Society itself.

The Circular of the 1st December, 1842, referring to the origin of the title given to our meetings, of *Conferences*, which is that usually given at Paris to literary assemblies of young men, recommends most earnestly that the Society should occupy itself exclusively with *practising* charity, instead of discussing systems for the relief of the poor. It will be useful to repeat here that passage, which puts forward one of the essential points of our organisation :—" It is not our office to instruct each other by discourses, but it is to set examples for mutual edification. Do not allow the spirit of contention, the habits of the forum, to get amongst us. We do not mean to find fault with this spirit in itself; discussion is good and necessary, when used in places and applied to subjects which need it, but our Society is a working society; it should do much, and speak little. Let us leave to our officers, to our Councils, the troublesome task of discussing whatever is susceptible of debate; let our Conferences, as a body, keep for themselves the consoling charge of good works."

Every Conference which desires to obtain admission into the Society, must solicit aggregation from the Council-General, adding to its request the list

of its members, an account of its first works, as well as the date of its formation, and an expression of its intention to conform to the regulations and usages of the Society. This request is forwarded directly, if the Conference be in a town where there is neither a Particular, a Central, nor an Upper Council; otherwise it is forwarded by the proper Council, who add a favourable or unfavourable opinion upon it.

If the aggregation be advisable, the Council-General acknowledges it. By the simple fact of this aggregation the new Conference participates in the Indulgences granted by the Holy See. Without the fulfilment of this indispensable formality, it would be deprived of them.

Moreover, nothing is more useful than this organization. If there were not unity in the aggregations, the Society would be very quickly liable to become a mere agglomeration of several associations, having no common spirit, possessing an identity in name only, and in which the most experienced eye could not detect the signs of relationship. The recommendations of the different local Councils, when they exist, are also a useful precaution, since they guarantee to the Council-General the good internal organization of the new Conferences, which could only be known upon the spot.

4. — Should several Conferences be formed in the same town, each takes the name of the parish where its members meet, and the several Conferences are united by a *Particular Council*, which takes the name of the town itself.

The principle laid down by Article 4, of a parochial denomination given to the Conferences, is a result of the essentially Catholic character of the

Society. As an obedient child of the Church, it connects itself as much as possible with her imperishable hierarchy.

5. — All the Conferences of the Society are united by a Council-General.

This is the place to explain shortly the organization of the Society.

Its foundations are the Conferences, whose object is practical works.

Over the Conferences, where there are several in the same town, is a Particular Council, the constitution of which will appear further on.

Over the Particular Council (as well as over isolated Conferences) is either a Central Council, or an Upper Council, embracing within its circumscription the Conferences of several dioceses, or of an entire country.

In fine, a Council-General, the centre of the whole Society, being a bond of union, a means of unity, and devoting the time and zeal of its members to the common interest.

In this way, each Conference is not isolated, and is not left to itself alone. It has not to form its rule, its traditions, without taking advice of any one; on the contrary, it forms part of a great Society, between the members of which there exists unity of heart, of intention, of customs; it rests upon the experience of other Conferences, upon the enlightened decisions of the different Councils; and while, in carrying out its own works, it preserves the fullest liberty of action, it enjoys the benefits of a direction common to, and accepted by all.

Need it be added, that the authority of the different Councils, from the Particular Council up to the Council-General, is an active authority, only because

it is spontaneously accepted, and that persuasion and good example are the surest, not to say the sole means of supporting their authority? The Church, nevertheless, has wished to give strength to these ties in the manner which is the most effectual for Christians, by granting most valuable Indulgences to Conferences and Councils instituted by the Council-General. This is the object of the two Briefs of the 10th January and 12th August, 1845.

CHAPTER I

THE CONFERENCES

6. — The Conferences meet upon such days and at such hours as they themselves may appoint.

The fullest latitude is allowed in this matter to the Conferences themselves, for nothing is more variable than the convenience of different localities, and it is of great importance that choice should be made of a day which is the most convenient to the greatest number; otherwise the meetings would run the risk of being little frequented, and consequently zeal and charity would relax.

This is, however, the occasion to be precise upon a point to which the Council-General attaches much importance—that is, the weekly periodical occurrence of the meetings. As the rules do not lay down this period expressly, an inference has been sometimes drawn, that meetings need only take place every fortnight or every month. Except rural Conferences, where, on account of the distance, difficulty of the roads, or different local circumstances, meetings every

eight days would be at times too troublesome, the Council-General has not ceased to advice Conferences to meet every week, as has been the rule since the commencement of the Society, and as it is almost the universal pratice. The subject of our meetings is, as has been already said, to form, above all things, Christian relations among the members, and to strengthen them in piety by mutual good example. But a meeting every fortnight, and still more every month, is inadequate to such a result, when moreover deductions must be made for the absences, more or less numerous, to which sickness, business, or travelling cannot fail to compel members. The result would be, that at the end of a year, they would scarcely have seen, scarcely have known each other, and many years may go on in this way without that Christian intimacy which the Society has in view, being formed among the members. Thus the Conferences, in which the meetings are far apart, are more cold and more languishing. In the others, on the contrary, a greater affection knits together the brethren and their common work, because they meet together for it oftener; and they assist in it with greater assiduity, because that assiduity becomes more habitual, and because they feel greater satisfaction in it. Moreover, the interests of the poor are better cared for when meetings, of which they are the immediate object, take place every eight days, and the treasury of the Conference is better supplied, because the collection, made oftener, becomes of necessity more abundant. The strongest reasons concur, then, in favour of weekly meetings, and it is desirable that in towns it should be a rule without exception. But even when a departure from this custom is necessary, as in certain rural districts, it is important to remark that the visit to the poor should always be weekly. Without a visit made at least

once a week, it would be almost impossible to have a constant knowledge of the wants of the poor, and to acquire over them an influence which would be salutary for the amelioration of their habits.

7. — The Conferences should endeavour to carry on a correspondence with each other for their mutual edification and support,—and that they may be able, whenever necessary, to recommend to the kind offices of each other, either the members themselves of the Society, or other young men, or the poor families who change their places of abode.

The habit of frequent communication between one Conference and another is one of those which has contributed most to the development of the Society, and which should be most sedulously kept up. Relations will be perhaps less intimate as the Society progresses than at the time when they were exchanged between seven or eight Conferences, formed by persons all of whom were mutually acquainted; but it ought not to entertain less cordiality and freedom, since, as has been said, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a ready-made friendship, and on entering into it, one comes, as it were, among a closely united family circle. It is, moreover, to facilitate these familiar intercommunications that the Society has been subdivided as has been shown already. The Conferences, being formed into groups under Central Councils and Upper Councils, should consider that it is by no means intended to segregate each from the common and the sole centre, the Council-General, but to bring them together one to another; for, among 5.000 Conferences spread over all the world, intimate relations are not possible in

reality, and they can only have very rare occasions of communication; but between twenty or thirty Conferences near each other, these communications should be no less frequent than easy.

The object of this correspondence is, above all, to give mutual edification, to communicate to each other the good which each witnesses; thus the blessed innovations of zeal do not remain isolated, but are propagated, and thereby works become general and are extended. This is then a cardinal point in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, since that which is most wanted in what is good, is not that it should be practised individually, but that it should be known to all, in order that it may be carried into execution by all those who desire to do so. These intercommunications take place by means of the visits of members, by printed reports, or still further through the Circulars, the General Report, and the Monthly Bulletin of the Society. Of course, all these communications ought to be simple, modest, and should never become, either for the members or for the Society, a subject from which may be drawn any vain glory for the little good accomplished. St. Vincent de Paul desired that his missionaries should preach simply, and that they should not preach themselves, to use his own expression; for a much stronger reason would he have abhorred to see those of his disciples who are the last comers and the least zealous, taking glory to themselves for some most trivial works.

Further, the relations of one Conference to another have for their aim the recommendation of young men who leave their families to settle in a town where the Society exists. Nothing is more useful than this custom. How many young men are there who leave the paternal roof well-disposed to remain pure, chaste, religious! How many have promised

it to their mothers, and have promised it to themselves! Nevertheless, no sooner are they settled in their new residence, than they lose all their pious habits, and sink into shameful excesses? The fault is doubtless in their passions, but it is more particularly in the isolation in which they find themselves from all pious companionship, from all Christian advice. Fortified by example, they would have maintained their rectitude; left to themselves, they fall miserably. To give to these young men, still practical Christians, a solid support by means of good and pious associations, to form pure companionship for them within the bosom of the Conference, to bestow upon them encouragement, alas! too necessary, what service is not this to religion, to their families, and to themselves! Conferences are earnestly solicited to give their best attention to this, so that they should never omit to recommend to other Conferences such of their members as go away, and that they should give the most earnest welcome to young men who come to them furnished with similar recommendations, and particularly that they may surround these youths with those safeguards and those precautions with which every father would wish to surround his son.

As to the poor who change their places of abode, it is likewise a very laudable custom to recommend them mutually. In this way the good may perhaps be finished in another place; only care must be taken that the removal of the poor be not made lightly and without a serious purpose, as is too often the case.

Nor should it be neglected to give recommendations to workmen who are making their *tour* of France, in order that they may be placed, as much as possible, in reputable houses and with honest and Christian employers. The soldiers who are carried

away by the conscription, should also be objects of the attentions of Conferences, in order that Christian schools may be got up for them, where they may be taught to read and write, and particularly to love God.

§ 1. Organization of Conferences.

8. — The business of each Conference is administered by a President, one or more Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, who constitute the " Board " of the Conference. There may be also in each Conference, if necessary, a Librarian, a Keeper of the Clothes Room, or other officers.

Article 8 enumerates the different officers of the Conferences, and it divides them into two categories —those who form the Board, to whom more particularly belongs the direction of the Conference, and those who fulfil certain accessory functions.

The Board of the Conference has, practically, a very great importance, particularly in such Conferences as are not under a Particular Council. It has to consider carefully the principal questions which belong to the business of the Conference, to prepare the matters which are to be submitted, in order to make its decisions clear, and to shorten discussions. Although the Rule does not require it, yet it is desirable that the meetings of the Board should be so frequent as to secure an actual efficiency; but it is necessary to remark that, according to the spirit of the Rule, the Board has only to prepare the business for the Conference, to consider all projects carefully, and that it is for the Conference itself to decide, especially in the towns where a Particular Council is not

in existence. To proceed otherwise would be to annul often the actual life of the Conference, and to take away all interest from its meetings (1).

9. — The President is elected by the Conference, The other officers are nominated by the President, with the advice of his Board. However, as is said further on, in the town where there is a Council of Direction, the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Conferences, as well as the other members who compose it, are appointed by the President of the Council.

Two cases may present themselves for the nomination of the President of a Conference : one, where there is but a single Conference in a town, and the other, where there is a Particular Council acting as a link between several Conferences.

In the first case, the Conference elects its President itself, and it cannot be otherwise. It is to be observed that this election is not made for a limited period, but for an indefinite time. This arrangement has, in some instances, been the subject of criticism on the part of some Conferences; they have feared that thereby there would be placed for ever at the

1. In Ireland there exists a custom, which has been approved of by the Council-General, and has now the force of a rule, that each Conference and Council should have a Spiritual Director, who is appointed by the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Council or Conference is situated; he is *ipso facto* a member of the Council or Conference, and also of its Board. It is also the custom that the approval, in writing, of the Bishop in whose diocese it is proposed to establish a new Conference, should be obtained, before the Council of Ireland will authorise its formation, or apply for its aggregation to the Council-General.

head of Conferences, officers whose intelligence or zeal would not meet every requirement, that, consequently, the progress of the Conference would be impeded through it, and that the poor would come to suffer by it. These fears have certainly some foundation, but the Council-General has always deemed them less serious than the inconveniences of an election. It is rare, in the first place, that an annual election, unless it be a mere matter of form, should not be a cause of a certain agitation, and in periods of dissension, political or otherwise, which may have to be passed through, that agitation may injure seriously the internal peace of the Conference. There might, besides, on account of these elections, be formed in the heart of an assembly, formerly the most peaceful, parties, and little cabals. Preferences and antipathies might be engendered, and nothing could be more fatal to a work of charity. Then, is not the spirit of preservation and of permanence necessary for the direction of any work whatsoever; and if a president knows that he is nominated for one year only, can he so easily undertake works of long duration, *the Patronage of apprentices, the Holy Family,* etc.? Perhaps his successor may lead the Conference in another direction, and that would be then for him a reason for attempting nothing. Finally, in a Christian work, where the offices are burdens and not distinctions, *onera non munera,* if a president does really retard the progress of the work, are there not a thousand modes of charitably letting him know it? The experience of twenty years has many times proved that, without offending an honourable brother, it was possible to lead him thus to a retirement, which to him was but a rest long desired. For all these reasons, the Council-General has always opposed the system of annual elections, and, thanks to the affection which the Conferences have for its

advice, this system is tending more and more to disappear.

The other Officers of the Council are named in these Conferences by the President, with the advice of the Board. This mode of appointment appears better calculated to insure unity in the direction, and to prevent too frequent elections.

In the second case, that of several Conferences connected by a Particular Council, the nomination of the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of Conferences belongs to the President of that Council. Article 31 says that these appointments ought to be made by the President, with the advice of his Council. This arrangement has for its object to draw closer among the different Conferences the bonds of fraternity, and to maintain a unity of spirit by means of an appointment emanating from a common authority. It may occur, indeed, that in the heart of the same town, divergent tendencies may manifest themselves among different Conferences; that one, for example, should incline towards the mode of proceeding of a confraternity, another towards the usages of a mere benevolent society; that this one would be too rigorous in the admission of its members, that too indulgent. The nomination of the Presidents of Conferences by the President of the Council wears away all these differences little by little and gently, and succeeds, through selections prudently arranged between the President and his Council, in blending these shades of difference into one common spirit—that of the Society. Lastly, it is easier to weigh the peculiar fitness of such or such a candidate in a Council where a familiar intercourse is kept up, and where there are but few present, than in a Conference where there is greater publicity, and where every objection to the choice proposed may take the appearance of personality.

Finally whatever may be the mode of appointment

of the President, the importance of the selection cannot be too much insisted upon. Whilst the President should never be in the Conference but as a kind of elder brother, the *primus inter pares*, experience proves that *what a President is, so is the Conference*. In order that a President should discharge his duties adequately, it should be considered not so much whether he enjoys a well-deserved position in the locality, or whether he is rich and generous, but much rather whether he possesses the personal qualities which are indispensable. Thus, above all, he must have *leisure* to busy himself with the Conference, for an honorary presidency is always a barren one; he should have *zeal*, which often makes leisure; he should also have *energy of mind* as well *as maturity of judgment*; he should be animated with the *spirit* of the works, in order that he may know how to surmount the difficulties which the exercise of works of charity presents, instead of being frightened by them; he should have a *conciliatory spirit*, to prevent or to appease differences, and, in fine, that *piety*, that *lively faith*, which know how to spread abroad, and which grow strong because they draw down God's blessings.

The constant practice of the Society (with some exceptions, which were almost always temporary), has been to confer the Presidentship of Conferences upon simple laymen. It is thus that the Society has been constituted, and has been approved of by the Holy See. But from the circumstance that the Presidency has not devolved upon ecclesiastics, it by no means follows that those amongst them who do us the honour of joining our ranks, not only as honorary members, but as active members, should not be received with the utmost gratitude. This is a point which the circular of the 31st May 1846 treats of in the fullest manner.

10. — The President directs the business of the Conference, receives and submits propositions, calls meetings, if necessary, and watches over the execution of the rules and the decisions of the Society. In case of absence, he entrusts his duties to a Vice-President.

11. — The Secretary prepares the minutes of the meetings. He keeps a registry of the names, professions, and residences of the members, of the dates of their admission, and the names of those by whom they were proposed. He keeps an exact account of all the families visited. He makes diligent inquiry concerning those recommended for relief, so that the Conference may not, if possible, visit any family which is not worthy of its sympathy and support. He notes any changes that occur in the families visited, or in the members who visit them.

The President is, as it were, the soul of a Conference; but he should not, however, absorb, through excess of zeal, the activity of the Conference in his own. It is well that he should watch over and superintend everything of importance, and having his share in all, through his advice at least; but it is not desirable that he should overtask himself, and take upon himself alone all the burden; for he would make, in some sort, his functions impossible for a successor somewhat more occupied, and he would destroy the zeal of the other members by thus always substituting his own for theirs.

When the President is absent, especially for some time, it should be understood that the Vice-President has all his powers, and *stands entirely in his place.*

A Conference should never stand still for want of a member, and this would be the case if the members did not venture to do anything in the President's absence. It is therefore not alone his *right*, but it is a *conscientious duty* on the part of the Vice-President to supply fully the place of the President when absent or prevented from attending, in order that, when the latter shall return, he may not find that all has been languishing for want of him.

This remark concerns not only the Conferences alone : it is applicable also, for stronger reasons, to Particular, Central, and Upper Councils, and above all, to the Council-General. In an undertaking, we must always have that undertaking in view, not the men.

The functions of the Secretary deserve special mention, notwithstanding that they are of less importance than those of the President; for if the President has the whole direction upon his shoulders, the Secretary carries out the details. Upon his exactness or upon his negligence depends consequently a number of good things or of little irregularities.

Thus, when the Secretary is absent or comes late, the minutes are either not read at all, or are not read at the time fixed by the rule, which is, in fact, the most convenient time. When he does not keep an exact note of the admission of members, of the adoption of families, of the names of visitors, the result is a grave irregularity; now, families, long forgotten, suffer from being neglected; now, there are others who receive double relief; and these inaccuracies greatly interfere with the regular business of the meetings.

Nothing would be more contrary to the usages of a society which is entirely voluntary, than finical habits, in imitation of the modes of proceedings of

a public department, or of what is commonly called "red tapeism"; thus the Council-General cannot do too much to guard Conferences against everything which would have this stamp upon it, and to recommend them to do everything, simply, without voluminous registers or numberless forms; for otherwise the spirit of our dear Conferences would receive a serious injury from this tendency. But simplicity in proceedings does not exclude order, quite the contrary; and precisely because things are done in a short time, they should be well arranged.

Such is the spirit in which a Secretary ought to understand his duties. Thus, the list of the poor should always be kept up to the current time : opposite to the name and address of each family, and of the ordinary relief which they have been allowed, an entry should be made in a column of observations of the creditable circumstances which concern this family, the principal remarks made by the visitors, and of every extraordinary assistance which has been granted to them. Such a list would require scarcely a quarter of an hour weekly to keep it up; and yet, it may be very useful for the proper guidance of the Conference, and specially for new visitors, who would find in it valuable information as to the poor entrusted to them.

12. — The Treasurer has the care of the funds, and takes at each meeting an exact account of the receipts and disbursements.

This article is of greater utility than one would imagine at first, and Conferences are requested to follow it to the letter; on the one hand, because by keeping the state of the treasury each time under the eyes of the members, it induces each of them to

proportion his demands to its resources, and on the other, because it guards against errors. Conferences, then, will do wisely not to depart from the custom of a weekly account being rendered by the Treasurer, as has sometimes been done for greater simplicity. But what is of still more importance, is never to fall into arrear with the purveyors. Besides that the price of provisions, and that of bread particularly, varies very often, and that if the rule were departed from, it may give rise to disputes; it is dangerous for Conferences to allow debts to accumulate, and it may be, at some particular moment, a cause of great embarrassment. It is much better to pay ready money—as the surest and the simplest way of proceeding.

The investment of funds, when a Conference has received auy sum of money which exceeds the current expenditure, deserves also some attention. We do not speak of a perpetual investment of capital, which would be funded, and the interest alone drawn, a course which would be very contrary to the spirit and to the traditions of the Society. We refer to those temporary investments, which after a good lottery or a fruitful sermon, are made for some months until the winter, with the double view of procuring for the poor some additional comforts, and of assuring the preservation of the capital. Nothing positive can be said here upon this question, but it seems to be prudent for Conferences to invest rather in public than in private securities, and to select those of fixed in preference to those of fluctuating values. High rate of interest is of much less consequence than complete security of the capital, and in critical times the money of the poor must be compromised as little as possible, and its recovery should always be prompt and easy. Finally, the investment of unemployed funds is the business of the Conference, and without

its vote the Treasurer cannot do it, under the penalty of pledging his own moral responsibility.

Some Conferences are in the habit of naming, at the Treasurer's request, a yearly committee for the verification of the accounts. This usage appears to be a very wise one, and Treasurers ought to adhere to it, as it protects their responsibility. Now-a-days, besides, it is of scarcely less importance to prove that one is correct as well as being so in fact.

13. — The Librarian collects instructive books adapted to the capacity of the persons relieved by the Conference, and he keeps an account of all books lent or bestowed.

14. — The keeper of the wardrobe collects the clothes for the poor, and keeps a regular account of them.

The importance of a library for the poor, recognized as it has been from the origin of the Society, is still greater now than formerly. The duties of a Librarian are then very serious, and the Conference should support in every way in their power the brother who devotes himself to them. It seems natural that the Librarian should be entrusted with the distribution, at the meetings, of the *Little Lectures* (*Petites Lectures*), which it is so useful to have done continuously and regularly.

The wardrobe should be the object of the most particular care on the part of the Conferences; for the poor are as often in want of clothes as of food, and to obtain them we must expend our trouble rather than our money. In the first place, the Conference must be often reminded of the wants of the wardrobe, a place always drawn upon, and above

all others badly furnished; so, when an offer is made, we should avail ourselves of it quickly, and not let the occasion slip. When the clothing is brought together, there is a good deal of time required for repairing, and it is here that the help of pious ladies is most valuable for carrying out a host of details, which men do not understand. In fine, it is necessary at times, as, for instance, in some towns, to organize searches in every house, to collect, with the assent, of course, of the proprietors, all the old lumber which is lying by in garrets, from the old broken article of furniture or torn hangings, for which use would soon be found, to the pieces of linen so needful to the sick. The wardrobe may often cost very little, and yet be well filled, and then it is of immense service. For the sick, it provides old linen and changes; to the poor, who are in want of bedding, it affords the means of separating children of different sexes. What a blessing is not a warm blanket, or a clean sheet, a dress, or a coat? It is often worth health, life itself, sometimes also the means of livelihood; for how many of the poor there are, who cannot obtain situations for want of suitable clothing?

§ 2. Order of the meetings.

15. — The President opens each meeting with the prayer *Veni Sancte Spiritus* followed by the *Prayer*, with the *Ave Maria*, and *Invocation of St. Vincent de Paul*. A portion of some pious book selected by the President is then read. Each member is called upon in turn to perform this duty. The prayer and pious reading should be gone through with the most serious attention, the

spiritual good of its members being as much the object of the Society as the relief of the poor.

Prayer is an essential portion of the business of the meetings, and should never be omitted, as it brings to mind one of the distinctive characteristics of the Society. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a Catholic work, and to draw down the blessings of God upon its labours, it should aways endeavour to sanctify them. The prayer, too, should be gone through without human respect, upon bended knees; for he would very badly comprehend the humility which the service of the poor requires who would be unwilling to bend his knee in public before his God.

It has become a pious custom, in almost all the Conferences, to say, before the invocation to St. Vincent de Paul, these two : *Cor Jesu sacratissimum, miserere nobis. — Regina sine labe concepta, ora pro nobis.* Some Conferences even add the invocation to St. Joseph, the great patron of good works.

The pious reading should be gone through with attention, and should be neither too long nor too short : not too long, for fear of prolonging the meeting ; nor too short, because the piety of the members should be nourished. The selection of the book from which the reading should be made, belongs to the President ; but of course the book ought to treat only of Christian and charitable subjects. In a certain old Conference, it has become a habit, that any member who in the course of his own reading meets with some passages worth remarking, and of a nature to edify his brothers, communicates them to the President, and with his assent reads it. This custom is a very good one, and deserves to be extended.

The works most used among the Conferences, for the pious reading, are the *Holy Gospels*, the *Imitation*

of Christ, the *Introduction to a devout life*. It is also very useful to read now and then, or at least once a year, the whole of the Rules, the Circulars of the Council-General, and this Commentary.

16. — The Secretary reads the minutes of the preceding meeting. Each member is at liberty to make observations upon them.

The minutes ought to contain all that occurs of importance at the meetings, and particularly whatever may serve as a precedent; but they should be drawn up as simply and as shortly as possible. They will thus be more to every one's taste.

17. — If it be necessary, the President announces the admission of candidates proposed at the preceding meeting, and invites their proposers to inform them of their admission.

18. — The President then proclaims the names of new candidates, should any such have been proposed. Members who have any observations to make in relation to the candidates, communicate such in writing, or verbally, to the President, in the interval between the meeting at which the names are announced, and that which follows. If no observations have been made, the admission of the member proposed takes place at the latter meeting. Each member should be careful not to introduce into the Society any person who will not edify his fellow members, or be edified by them, and who would not endeavour to love his colleagues and the poor as brothers.

The two articles, which should be considered together, point out the essential *forms* to be followed in the admission of candidates. The points which they put most prominently forward, are the following:

1st. The proposal ought to be made, in the first instance, to the President in private; for Article 18 lays it down that *it is the President who announces the names of the candidates who have been proposed.* The Circular of the 14th of July, 1841, explaining this passage is to the following effect: — "Moreover, we request that before proposing a candidate, those who propose him should never fail to confer on the matter with the President, who is specially charged with the direction and with the honour of the Conference"; and the Circular of the 1st of November, 1852, taking up the subject again, adds these reflections: — "It is easy to understand how wise are these directions; for, if those who propose a candidate, in place of speaking of the matter in private with the President, began, as we see it done too often, by proposing him publicly to the Conference, it would be much more difficult to prevent an admission which may be little desirable... If, on the contrary, the proposal is made always after an understanding with the President, it is to be presumed that it is done because it ought to be done."

2ndly. Every member is free to make observations upon the candidate; but these observations ought not to be made during the meeting. In public the discussion of any particular name, every hesitation, every question would assume the appearance of a personality. If the habit were adopted of making observations in this manner, unless there were grave objections to the candidate, each one would conceal his own opinion, would hold his peace, only to give way to his regret apart from the others; whence it would arise that, without the cordial assent of all, admis-

sions would take place of some who should not be received, but whom one would shrink from objecting to publicly; so that, consequently, in the Conferences there would be an absence of unanimity and of cordial co-operation, and sometimes even defections would take place.

Now, what should be the course we ought to follow, if serious objections have been laid before the President? In such a case, the duty of the President is to have an explanation on the subject, in a free and perfectly cordial manner, with the proposing member, to induce him to withdraw the party proposed, if the opposition be serious and well founded. Nevertheless, it may occur that there would be differences upon that point between the President and the member who has made the proposal: in such a case the President will do well to consult his Board, or even that of the Particular Council of the town, if there be one, and to support his position by their advice. It is then to be presumed that this mediatory opinion will be listened to, and that it will be easy to come to an understanding; but if, unfortunately, the difference of opinion should still continue, it can be put an end to only by a vote of the Conference—a final resort which is of very rare occurrence, and which ought always to be so.

But if no opposition arise, in that case which is the most usual, the President has not, according to Article 17, to call for a vote; he has simply to state that the proposed candidate has not been the subject of any observation, and to announce his admission. Open voting would have produced serious inconveniences, and a ballot would be a solemn proceeding little in accordance with the simple habits of a Conference.

3rdly. Besides the general conditions which we have enumerated, for the proposal of candidates

Article 18 mentions one especially, which is perhaps too little attended to; it says that *the member should edify his fellow-members* AND BE EDIFIED BY THEM. This recommendation is very important, because, if persons are induced to join Conferences as members who do not find attractions in them, who come there just to get through a duty, and because they are constrained to it in some sort, zeal cannot be but cool. "The first qualification" (as is very wisely stated in the Circular of the 1st of November 1847), "that a candidate ought then to possess on presenting himself for admission into a Conference, is to attach a very high value to the prosperity of the Society, not assuredly through pride but through a deep feeling of gratitude towards God who has raised up in our age this plan, heretofore not thought of or not practised, of succouring the poor, and at the same time of making better Christians of those who visit them."

4thly. At the birth of the Society, when a new member was admitted, it was usual for the President to address to him an exhortation explaining the spirit of our Conferences. Unfortunately this custom has not been continued, and in consequence of the multiplicity of admissions, it was difficult to put it in practice. But it cannot be too much insisted on that a kind welcome should be given to new-comers, that they should not be allowed to take their seats *incognito* in the midst of the Conference, that certain of the members should be even assigned to them in order to lead them into the practical business of our works; upon this their perseverance often depends. Nay, more, the President gives to the new member a copy of the *Manual* of the Society, and exhorts him to make himself perfectly acquainted with it by a frequent perusal. How much better and more quickly too would not the spirit of our Conferences spread among all the members, if they were careful

to read the Rules, the Circulars, the facts connected with the Society? Instead of guessing at our customs and our rules, and sometimes arriving at a very incorrect notion of them, they would become speedily and completely acquainted with them by such reading, which can never take up much time.

Certain Conferences have believed that there would be some advantage in giving to their members certificates to attest that they belonged to the Society.

This measure offers many inconveniences in a Society numerous and wide-spread as that of St. Vincent de Paul. Besides the danger of the fabrication of false certificates, is not there still a greater danger to be apprehended of seeing these certificates preserved during all their lifetime by men who may have abandoned their Conferences, and who would hawk about with a personal, interested view, these titles which had been too lightly conferred? Then, what are the advantages of these certificates? It is indeed not easy to say, for when a member travels or goes to another Conference, it is much more preferable to furnish him with a letter from his President. It is at once simpler and safer.

5thly. It is well to call to mind that every member, upon entering the Society, can gain a Plenary Indulgence on the day of his admission, conformably to the Brief of the 10th January, 1845. It would be be greatly to be desired that a member should never neglect this precious favour, which would certainly be for him the pledge of many other graces.

19. — The Treasurer announces the state of the funds and the amount of the collection made at the close of the preceding meeting, so that each member may proportion his demands for relief to the resources of the Conference.

The spirit of the Rule, as may be perceived by the 19th Article, is never to allow the expenses of the Conferences to fall into arrear, but also not to hoard up. It is in some sort the translation of that expression of our sacred Books : " If you have much, give abundantly : but if you have little, give a little, and the little thou hast, give willingly. " The works of the Conferences being entirely optional, should be from day to day; besides, nothing is more Christian than to trust to Providence, and to reckon upon its inexhaustible care, when the work is undertaken for God. To make a reserve, to have before us a disposable capital which we never touch, to lay out beforehand a budget as in a relief association, are proceedings essentially contrary to the spirit of our Society. When it has anything and it finds out a real case of misery, it gives bountifully and with a generous heart; if it has nothing, it appeals to the charity of its members, to that of their friends, of the public; and up to this day, God has never permitted that this confidence should be deceived.

20. — Tickets available for relief in kind, and which vary according to the requirements of the poor, are then distributed.

Each member is called upon in his turn by the President, and mentions aloud what he applies for, and for how many families. He gives when called upon to do so, detailed information about these families.

In some Conferences the power, not entirely, absolute, but very extensive, of asking for his poor whatever relief tickets he may wish for, is left to each member. It would seem that this custom ought to be reformed ; for the natural inclination which leads a

man to be more moved with pity for the misery which comes directly under his own eye, the pleasure of giving to his poor more than on former occasions, a certain timidity, in fine, in the presence of reiterated importunities, easily lead members to swell their demands; and hence necessarily results an injury to the equitable distribution of relief; for when each member fixes at his own discretion the allowances of his own poor, it is not possible that he should not make his demands with more or less ardour, according to his character, and that inequalities, much to be regretted, should not be established among the different families. It is, therefore, a prudent measure to entrust the classification of the poor to a Committee of Inquiry (or Visiting Committee), always composed of the same members. These members visit all the families who ask to be adopted, and they propose to the Conference their classification into certain categories, according to the degree of their necessities; then, once or oftener during each year, they revise the general list of the poor, after having made a special visit. The visitors are always listened to, when defending the interests of their poor, and in case of disagreement the Conference decides.

Here another point presents itself, apparently a secondary one, but which, however, deserves attention. Is it well that members who have been absent from a meeting, should be able, in the interval between one meeting and another, to go to seek their relief tickets from the Treasurer?

The opinion of the Council-General has always been in the negative. They believe that the true interests of the poor, as well as that of the Conference itself, is opposed to this permission being conceded. The interests of the poor: — for the members ceasing to have a positive necessity for coming to the Conference to get their relief tickets, would more

easily free themselves from assiduous attendance at the meetings, and the weekly collection would be greatly affected by this, even although there was a collecting box at the Treasurer's, as has been sometimes proposed ;— the interests of the Conference :— for, by absenting themselves frequently from the meetings, the members would certainly in time lose the spirit of them and the taste for them.

As to the mode of distribution pointed out by Article 20, it has necessarily been modified by the force of circumstances in such Conferences as are pretty numerous, as it would have taken up all the time of the meetings. Many Treasurers have adopted the habit of preparing beforehand the relief tickets of each member in an envelope, which is handed to him immediately ; and in this manner the distribution is carried out immediately and without loss of time.

On the other hand, that which ought not to be laid aside, is the custom of asking of members detailed information upon the situation of the families whom they visit. It is not, in point of fact, sufficient that religious improvement should take place among the poor ; it is necessary, for the general edification, that the Conference should know that it has been effected ; it is necessary that it should be talked of, lest the new-comers, not hearing anything said about it, should come to neglect it, and that even the old members should allow themselves to lose sight of it. Further, every member ought to annonce immediately the death of any of his poor : the *De Profundis* is recited for his intention at the close of the meeting, and the Holy Sacrifice is offered up for him at a later period. If there be yet time, some members are appointed to accompany the body to the church, and to attend the funeral.

The relief should be punctually given to the poor at their residences, before the next meeting. But the members administering it may use their own discretion, both as to the precise time, number, and manner of their charitable visits, and also as to the best means of introducing into these families the love of religion and the practice of their duties.

Nothing is more natural than the recommendation made by this paragraph. The families that are visited are all poor, and often in actual distress. To put off for a pleasure trip, for some affair of little importance, the *weekly* visit to be made to the poor is an act of negligence deeply to be regretted, for those families often suffer from it. We should never put off our visits beyond the time on which the poor are expecting us. Besides, this punctuality need not be mathematical, and even, as a general rule, it would be wrong to give the poor the habit of counting upon help at a fixed hour, which would certainly drive out of their mind any idea of sparing.

Should a member ask for any rules to guide his conduct, or for advice in difficult cases, he is heard with attention and kindness, and receives from the President and every other member such replies as their experience and charity suggest.

This paragraph recalls once more to visitors the aim of the Society in its relation with the poor : it is to make them better men and better Christians. In fact, this cannot be too much insisted upon, as without this the Society of St. Vincent de Paul would become a merely philanthropic and purely human

work, which, even humanly speaking, is very barren and insufficient. The visitors will have then to seek for every possible means of instructing the poor upon their duties, and of making them thoroughly comprehend them. Sometimes it will be by means of a kind word addressed to the child, that they will take the work in hand; sometimes by means of a good book, an almanak, a little lecture (*petite lecture*), a pious image, or a crucifix, bestowed; at other times it will be by means of some edifying reading, made for some poor invalid, whom they will strive to instruct upon it. The manner may be varied infinitely in the details, but at the bottom it will never be accomplished but by a great devotion to it, a great affection for it, and particularly by means of prayer. Let us pray for the conversion of our poor; let us obtain prayers for them from pious souls; let us sacrifice something to this intention, and we may be sure of success. It was thus that the Saints acted, and it is one of the secrets of the conversions which they worked.

Of course, when a member consults the Conference upon a case of difficulty, he should take care that no inconvenience can arise from making it public; if that be so, he should consult the President in private.

21. — If relief in money, clothes, or books be applied for, the grounds for such application should be fully explained, and the Conference votes in consequence. Should the case of distress be such that a grant of money is indispensable, and that relief in kind will not answer instead, the members receiving the money must take special care to watch diligently over the use made thereof.

This article expressly recalls an usage so well established that it is scarcely necessary to state it, to wit, that the distribution of relief in kind is the rule, and the exception a grant of money. The reasons for this custom are so obvious, that it is useless to recall them.

Some Conferences have remarked that certain of their members had a stronger tendency than others to ask for the extraordinary relief to which the 21st Article refers. The result of this is, that without their desiring it, their poor are more favoured than others. To remedy this trifling abuse, the habit has been adopted of entering the extraordinary relief which has been granted upon the list of families, opposite to the names of the families who had received it; so that the Conference is not again put to the same expense for the same poor person without being fully aware of it.

22. — After the allocation of the different sorts of relief, the members deliberate on the disposal of any situations they may be able to procure for the poor, on the plans for the relief of the distressed, and on the families to be visited by new members, or by those who wish to visit more. No family can be admitted on the relief roll of the Society without a previous statement of its wants, made either by the Secretary, or by such other member as may have been appointed by the President to collect information. Before the Conference decides, every member has full liberty to make any remarks upon the case he may think useful.

The adoption of families should be the subject of very serious attention on the part of the President

and of the Conference. It concerns, in fact, the prosperity and the honour of the Society that all abuses arising in this way should be avoided; that women still young, *particularly if they live by themselves*, should not be visited, and that every precaution should be taken to avoid even the appearance of scandal. This principle has been laid down from the very commencement, and is again referred to in the preliminary considerations of the Rule; it has been pointed out above; but the more the Conferences do multiply, the more it is indispensable to hold firmly to this principle. For the poor are to be found everywhere; and when there is so great a choice among so much misery, we should connect ourselves only with those, the relief of whom is exempt from inconvenient circumstances, and cannot cause disedification.

Care must also be taken, particularly in large towns, to adopt only the poor who live in reputable houses. This rule may appear severe; but is it not a case to which the popular proverb may apply: "Charity well regulated begins at home"?

It is also fit that prudence should be used with regard to poor persons subject to grave faults—drunkards, persons of dissipated habits, or those living in a state of concubinage. Undoubtedly these poor people ought not to be entirely excluded, unless they are in the category of those of whom mention has been made above; but they must not be visited except with the desire to correct them, and only so long as there is hope of effecting a cure. Otherwise, if relief were still continued to them, after all advice has been exhausted, it would be a cause of scandal for the honest poor, and it would give them grounds for believing, although erroneously, that the Society attaches no value to good morals and upright conduct. There is in this, therefore, a wise middle

course to be followed between too great strictness and too much indulgence, and by paying attention to it success will be obtained.

Finally, care must be taken not to adopt such a number as would be too large, regard being had to the number of visitors. Otherwise, if the members take charge of too many families, they would be led to visit them only in a hurried way, to do no more for them than just to distribute alms, and to neglect spiritual relief, which cannot be given but during visits of some duration and entirely friendly in their character. This mode of considering the matter is therefore very serious, and Conferences ought to lay down as a rule for themselves, to adopt but just so many families as they can visit in a Christian spirit, and with the views of our holy patron.

But all is not done by adopting the poor : they must have visitors allotted to them. This duty is the special task of the President ; for some member may be suitable for almost every family, and yet not succeed with certain of the poor ; he may be too timid or too harsh, too slow or too hasty, for exceptional characters. To some of the poor it is well to give a visitor who impresses them by the gravity of his manner, and even by the importance of his position; with others, on the contrary, success is to be had only by gaining their confidence by dint of perseverance and of long patience. There, is, then, a two-fold study of the character of the visitors and of the poor, to be made by the President, and he cannot attach too much importance to it. With respect to the visitors, this labour will be easy to the President, who meets them each week ; but with respect to the poor, it requires more trouble, because their number is much more considerable. To effect it, there are two means, between which the President can make a choice : either to make periodically, at least once a

year, the complete round of the families, or for himself to pay the first visits, for some weeks, to the families newly adopted. Some Presidents have found leisure to carry out both plans at the same time; they cannot be too much congratulated upon their efficiency.

23. — Members leaving for a time, or for ever, the place where the Conference meets, give notice to the President, who confides to others the duties with which such members were entrusted.

The recommendations of this Article, although purely of detail, possess real importance. Thus, if a member neglects to give intimation of his departure, his poor or his works may be abandoned: if he forgets to acquaint the President personally of it, or if he himself gives charge to another member, either of his poor or of his works, the distribution of the families by the President, which we have just mentioned, may be disturbed by it, or the works would not perhaps be entrusted to the brother to whom they would be most suited. In either case, the good order of the Conference would be disturbed, particularly if the circumstance were of frequent recurrence.

Let us add, that it is very well that the members who go away should draw up a detailed report upon the condition of their poor, which would enable those who replaced them to understand better and sooner the characters, the necessities, and the misery of these poor. Some brothers have also, upon such occasions, the praiseworthy custom of giving to their Conference a more considerable sum as alms, to represent them in the collections in which, during their absence, they cannot share, and to help the Conference in supporting its poor. This practice cannot be recommended too strongly.

24. — The Conference then considers any observations that may be made with a view to its interests, its increase, and the best use of its funds.

This part of the meeting ought not to be neglected, because the Conferences would readily degenerate and fall into monotony, were they to occupy themselves exclusively with material questions, and not to give a little time to such as are general. Here are two shoals to be shunned : the first—under pretext of being engaged upon more exalted interests, to allow themselves to get into speechifying, into dissertations upon charity, into theoretical discussions which would be quite opposed to the simplicity of our meetings ; the second—to restrict themselves to what concerns the Conference exclusively. It cannot be too well remembered that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is one, and, in order that this unity may be maintained, it is well that the Conference should converse often about such things as occur of an edifying nature in other Conferences—that they should endeavour to imitate them and to turn them to account, so as not to fall into apathy and torpor. Thus, it is very suitable to select that part of the meeting when it is most numerous, to give an account to the Conference, either of whatever has occurred of importance at the Particular Council of the town, if there be one, or of the general advices contained in the monthly *Bulletin* of the Society, or of the interesting Reports of other Conferences. It is also the most opportune moment for reading the circulars of the Council-General, a deep knowledge of which the members are often so deficient in, and which is so really useful. Sometimes, all these documents are left to rest in the archives of the Conference, which

is the same as saying in the dust. This is a very positive loss to the members.

It will be well, also, from time to time, to read, at this period of the meeting, some profitable report upon any special work of the Conference, with the view of exciting interest, and of constantly stimulating zeal, which is, alas! so ready to flag in every human undertaking.

25. — At the close of the meeting, and before the prayer, the Treasurer makes the collection, to which each member contributes an offering proportioned to his means, but always in secret. Those who cannot spare time for the service of the poor, try to increase the amount of their pecuniary contributions.

The collection should not be made merely for form's sake; it ought always be done very seriously, and every one is bound to examine himself before God, in his soul and conscience, whether the sacrifice which he makes to the poor is in proportion to his means. Almsgiving, in fact, is not to the Christian a matter of simple counsel—it is a rigorous duty; and whilst it may be discharged otherwise than by the collection at the Conference, and whilst a portion (of the extent of which every one can alone be the judge) ought to be reserved for other works, and especially for those of his own parish, it is right that every member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul should, within the bosom of his Conference, discharge this precept generously, liberally. , Otherwise, how could he ask of others, if he has not begun by being himself the first to give? How, above all, can he ask of God to bless his labours, if he has not deserved that blessing by a truly adequate self-sacrifice?

The collection, then, ought to be a serious act, but

it ought also to be a secret one; and nothing would be more opposed to the spirit of the Society than to stimulate its members to considerable donations by the attraction of publicity. Thus a newly formed Conference had thought, with a very laudable intention, that the amount of its collections would be increased if they were made upon a plate, so as to allow each one's offering to be seen; and it sought the opinion of the Council-General upon it. The latter was unanimous in condemning this practice. Thus, too, other Conferences have sought to replace the weekly collection by an assessment laid upon the members, either according to a rate fixed beforehand, or according to each one's means. The Council-General has likewise been at all times opposed to a tendency in this direction. Besides the fear that an assessment upon a low scale would injure the prosperity of the treasury, and that an assessment at a high rate would keep away many good Christians of small means, yet zealous, it was most of all to be feared that the secrecy of the collection would be violated. In Conferences, there ought to be no difference of rank or fortune: this is one of the most certain causes of their success. Now, the less opulent should not be exposed to blush at the smallness of their alms, nor the more wealthy be tempted to grow proud of the superiority of their donations. If anywhere Christian equality should be preserved, it is in the presence of charity. Nevertheless, in some country Conferences, it has been permitted that gifts in kind may be made by members as their contribution to the collection. This departure from the rule, which yet does not prevent a collection, has arisen from the nature of the circumstances.

The collection is intended for the use of the families visited, but the members should not

neglect any other means that may present themselves of increasing the funds of the Conference.

At the commencement of the Society, the collections were almost the only resource of our Conferences; at present, they still are one of the most considerable sources of revenue, and they amount, on a average, to the half or more of the total receipts. This continuance of resources personal to, and furnished by, the Members themselves is a most happy sign; but, as the Rule says, the Members should not neglect any other means that may offer of increasing the funds. These means vary according to localities and customs; here, it is a charity sermon; there, lotteries; elsewhere, bazaars or sales; almost every where subscriptions solicited, extraordinary donations procured; but what ought not to vary, are the principles which should govern the collection of these resources.

First, and above all, there must be intense zeal to keep up the treasury of the poor. Often there are numerous steps towards this end, there are refusals to be endured, sometimes even difficulties to be overcome. A Member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul ought not to allow himself to be daunted, provided,of course, that he has not exceeded the limits of propriety. When one sees closely the misery of so many families, when one's heart is sensibly affected by their privations, their nakedness, and more than all by their spiritual destitution, he ought not to let himself be checked by some refusals, he ought not to fear being importunate: the pleasure of solacing these miseries well deserves being purchased by some annoyances.

Yet if there must be zeal, in order not to lose through our own fault any occasion of increasing the patrimony of the poor, this zeal must not end in too human an attachment to material resources. In a

Christian work money is never more than a secondary thing : what effects more than all else is devotedness — desire for the salvation of souls. Hence arise two results : the first is, that if the treasury does not fill to the measure of our wishes, we must not be grieved at it, nor, above all, must we be discouraged, but, on the contrary, we must persevere more than ever ; the second is, that to procure money we must never resort to modes which are not entirely of a Christian character. Nothing is, in fact, more fatal than to pursue a praiseworthy end by means which are not free from reproach, or to wish to accomplish a Christian work by ways contrary to Christianity. Consequently there should be no balls for Conferences, no theatrical representations.

The Council-General has been often consulted about the extent which should been given to that interdiction of theatrical representations. It is necessary to insert here a summary of its answers.

I. Concerts, musical afternoon or evening parties, may be tolerated, provided that the text of the " interludes ", " songs" or " monologues " has been examined beforehand by the President of the Conference or by a member whom he has designated as his delegate.

II. Dramatical representations are only authorized on the condition that they will not take place in a theatre and that the plays do not admit of woman's parts.

But there should not be even those lotteries, where cupidity is stimulated by the allurement of gain, where recourse is had to speculation to bring in funds ; nor should any other means be adopted which are repugnant to simplicity or to humility. All ought to be modest, christian, in order not to attract too much the eyes of the world, and not to alienate the blessings of God.

This prohibition does not apply to lotteries where the tickets are circulated without publicity by reliable persons and where the prizes are of a value too small to allow of the subscribers being carried away by the attraction of gain.

26. — The meeting closes with the *prayer to Saint Vincent de Paul,* and the prayers *Pro benefactoribus,* and *Sub tuum præsidium.*

The custom is established in some Conferences of reciting at the close of the meeting the prayer *for the use of the members of the Society* (1), which is to be found in the *Manual,* and at the end of the Rule. It cannot be doubted that this would be a source of grace for the Conferences, and it is desirable that the members individually, no less than the Conferences as a body, should recite this prayer frequently.

CHAPTER II

OF PARTICULAR COUNCILS

When several Conferences are established in the same town, Article 4 states that they are to be united by a Particular Council. It is proper, therefore, to examine the motives which have led to the creation of this institution and the spirit which should guide it. The details of its organization will appear further on.

The increase of members in the Conferences is certainly a very great benefit, and every member should

1. 300 days of Indulgence are granted each time this prayer is said.

labour actively towards it. Yet, there is a point beyond which this organization leads to serious inconveniences, namely, when the number of the members becomes too great. Then the meetings lose somewhat of their cordiality, by becoming more formal, and something of their freedom, in order to prevent confusion and disorder. A Conference is then no longer a place of meeting for Christian friends ; it is an assembly of men who deliberate gravely ; moreover, zeal greatly relaxes in the same proportion as numbers increase, since each member depends upon the other, and individual interest diminishes. It is therefore most dangerous for a Conference to become too numerous ; the spirit of simplicity, of fraternity, of cordiality may be wrecked. Thus it has been early considered as necessary for Conferences that have reached this point, to divide into several Conferences, and experience has justified such an opinion ; but this division was not intended to lead to a schism, nor even to an isolation, nor to an entire severance of the branches of the original Conference. It is for this object that provision has been made by the formation of Particular Councils, which, while allowing the individuality of each Conference to subsist, nevertheless combines the common strength of all. Experience has, moreover, proved the utility of the means adopted.

Now, thanks to this combination, we have been enabled to multiply the number of members in important towns in a manner that could not have been expected, as well as the number of the poor visited, of the funds collected, of the good accomplished. Besides we may this succeed in establishing Conferences in every parish and obtain with the unity of direction in important matters, a great freedom of action for each Conference in the details of its operations.

The separation of one Conference into several Con-

ferences is the most frequent case where there is occasion for the creation of a Particular Council; yet sometimes it happens in towns which are rather extensive, or in suburbs which are attached to them, that a second Conference is organised entirely outside of the first. This does not make it the less necessary to bind these Conferences together by a common Council, but it should be observed that the Council-General, before pronouncing the aggregation of the second Conference, always advises with the primitive Conference, in order to be well assured that they are acting harmoniously, and that the formation of a new centre is caused by charity, and not by any unfortunate spirit of rivalship.

In fine, we must observe that this institution, which was only applied at first to Conferences of the same town or of its immediate suburbs, has been extended recently to country Conferences. The boundary of the jurisdiction of the Particular Councils is in such case traced by the Council-General at the time of their institution; for this limitation arises no longer from circumstances, and it varies according to the relations, the proximity, and the necessities of the Conferences grouped together. This innovation is most advantageous, since it is a protection against the dangers of isolation among Conferences scattered through the country, whose very weakness makes it necessary that they more than all others should support one another.

27. — The *Particular Council* of a town consists of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, of all the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Conferences in the town, and of the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of Special Works in which all are interested.

The composition of Particular Councils has been framed, as may be readily seen, with the double view of combining unity of direction, and the free action of the Conference for their works. Thus, the members of the Board need not be attached to any Conference, and which ought necessarily to tend to encourage them all in an equal degree ; then, besides this Board there are the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of each Conference, and the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Special Works. So all interests are protected in order that the decisions arrived at may be accepted more freely by all ; and all the works are represented in order that the absence of any one may not involuntarily cause its interests to be postponed.

With regard to the *special* works, as the Rule calls them, and which it would be more correct to call *general works*, they are those which, for their full development, require the common concurrence of all the Conferences. These works alone are represented in the Particular Councils, and not the works of this or that Conference, which have the President of the Conference for their natural guardian.

It is well to note, by-the-bye, that when the article speaks of " a " *Vice-President*, here, as in sundry articles, that does not prevent other officers from being named if there be a real necessity for them ; so also as to Vice-Secretaries and Vice-Treasurers. Nevertheless, it would be very much opposed to the spirit of the Society to multiply, beyond what is necessary, the number of officers, in order to foster self-love and vanity.

28. — The *Particular Council* is charged with those works and important measures which interest all the Conferences of the town.

This article determines plainly the functions of Particular Councils. Thus, if the matter in question be concerning a work entirely of detail, or the internal arrangements of relief in a Conference, the Particular Council has nothing to do with it, since that does not affect all the Conferences of the town. But if, on the contrary, it is a question of regulation, which concerns the Society at large—if it is a measure, the result of which will not be confined to the Conferences of the town, but may extend over all the others, it does not lie, strictly speaking, with the Particular Council to come to a decision on the matter; it has only to offer advice, leaving it to the Council-General to give a definitive solution. But when a question arises upon a measure that interests *all* the Conferences of the town, and which *concerns them only*, it is then that the action of the Particular Council comes into operation, and that it has the right to adopt positive decisions. Without entering into the detail of these measures, it is certain that they are of frequent occurrence. Thus, where new Conferences are formed, it is for the Particular Council to fix their limits. When some important works are proposed, it is for it to decide upon whether there is occasion for them, how they should be proceeded with, etc. When a Conference departs from the Rule, it is for it to remind the Conference of the Rule, and by its advice to lead back to its observance.

29. — It decides on the allocation of the common fund. This fund is maintained by all donations not made expressly to any of the Conferences, collections made at the general meetings of the town, and by the contributions which the Presidents bring to each Council in the names of their

respective Conference. This fund is intended to meet the expenses of the special Works of the town, and to sustain the poorest Conferences.

The administration of the common funds of the Conferences is one of the functions of the Particular Council. These funds are destined, as the article says, to meet the works of the town and to support the poorest Conferences. This destination shows theil real utility, and proves their high value. Misery never is, in fact, distributed equally amongst the different quarters of a town, and it is very right that the more abundant resources of the better-circumstanced Conferences should aid the distress of the others. It is one of the most Christian applications of the true charity which should animate the members of the Society, and one of the most positive proofs that they all act but with one heart and one soul. This is the place to add that the funds of the Particular Council, as well as those of the Conferences, ought always to be employed upon the works of the Society. " We have been asked ", says the Circular of December 1st, 1842, " if it be permissible to apply some of the funds received as donations or through the collections at Conferences, to any other charitable purpose than the works specially adopted by them. It appeared to us that this ought not to be done; that it would be, firstly, misunderstanding the intentions of the donors; that, secondly, such a latitude would have as a result, to embarrass considerably the works which we have undertaken. By wishing to do everything, we should end, in fact, by doing nothing. A charitable society, which does not know to limit itself, is soon exhausted. Because we have selected certain works, we have not entered upon an engagement to devote ourselves to all. Pardon me, Sir and dear Brother, if in this I appear to wish to restrain the effects of your zeal; but we

must be wise with soberness, and it is to render your efforts more efficient and more lasting, that I venture these counsels, dictated by a prudence which may savour of timidity."

The supply of the funds of the Council presented a two-fold difficulty: of drawing too much to itself, or of being insufficient. If the resources of the Conferences had been too much concentrated in the common fund, their zeal in collecting funds would certainly have been diminished. It is, perhaps, a weakness to wish to expend, through our own hands or through our Conference, the money which we have procured, and to put forth so much the more ardour in its collection, as we shall have a larger share in its distribution; but this weakness is too natural to man, not to be taken into account. If, on the other hand, too limited resources had been provided for it, the common fund would have been without an object. It appears that the Rule steers safely between these two dangers.

Thus, every Conference is exclusively proprietor of the funds which it collects by weekly collections; by subscriptions; by donations made to it; by the local resources which it procures within its own limits, and which vary according to local customs.

The Council centralises the donations made to the Society in the town, and not made to this or that Conference, the funds arising from lotteries, general collections organised not in a single parish, but in the entire town, the contributions of honorary members (Art. 55), the collections made at the general meetings of the town, and the offerings of each Conference. Besides, it is to be remarked that this limitation is necessarily, to a small extent, somewhat variable and elastic, and that, in the spirit of the Society, there ought to be made under this head, between the funds of the Council and those of the

Conferences, certain concessions according to the exigencies of the occasion. Further, the offerings of each Conference are now fixed generally at a certain per-centage upon their funds. It seemed useless, in fact, to renew a vote upon this matter at every meeting of the Conference. At Paris, the Conferences vote the tenth of their funds, and this provision is sufficient on account of their number ; in other towns, a different proportion has necessarily been adopted.

30. — The President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer, constitute an ordinary Council, to which belongs the direction of the ordinary business.

Just as in simple Conferences, this Council is of great importance ; not only does it prepare the subjects for deliberation and thus shorten them, but it also expedites a crowd of small details, in which the President is very glad to receive advice, but which are not worth calling for an extraordinary meeting. So that nothing is done precipitately, and nevertheless small matters, which are the most numerous, are not protracted indefinitely. This is a very important point ; for in works of charity, if it be of consequence to do them well, it is also necessary to do them quickly.

If the interest of the Society and the management of the business make it necessary, the members of the ordinary Council or board may ask other members to join in their deliberations.

31. — The President is nominated by the Council, with the advice of the Conferences. On the first occasion, he is nominated by all the Conferences together. The President nominates the

Presidents and the Vice-Presidents of Conferences and of Special Works, as well as the Vice-President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer of the Particular Council, taking the advice of his Council upon all these nominations.

This article clearly defines the occasions and the mode of nomination of the different officers and members of the Particular Council. One question only has been raised, viz., can the Council nominate the President, *after obtaining the opinion of the Conferences, but still contrary to that opinion?* and can the President nominate the officers whom he is charged with selecting, *after the advice of his Council, but still contrary to that advice?* The Council-General being consulted upon this question, were of opinion that *in principle* the Particular Council, as well as the President, could proceed with the nominations which belong to them ; but that, in a work of charity, we must adhere less to a strict interpretation of texts than to circumstances. Now, in fact, it is certain that a Council could not impose a President upon the Conferences of a town *in spite of them*, and that a President could not impose upon his Council members whom the majority of that Council would *formally* reject. Here charity solves the difficulty, as also it will prevent its being raised ; for, in order that good works may be possible, there must be an intimate union among all ; and great danger to the Society would arise upon the day when any would wish to act in virtue of rights and of prerogatives, and not rather through a mild firmness.

What is said as to the nomination of the President of the Particular Council does not apply to the cities in which the Council-General, Superior Councils or Central Councils sit. The Presidents of these several Councils being *by right* Presidents of the Particular

Council of the city (or town) where they are established (article 44 of the General Rule, 8 of the Regulations for Superior Councils, 7 of the Regulations for Central Councils), the Particular Councils should abstain from electing a President and should await the election of the President of the Council placed in a higher degree by the constitution of the Society.

32. — The President of the Particular Council directs its proceedings, receives and submits propositions, and calls meetings when necessary. He presides at the general meetings of the district.

The Rule does not define the time of meeting of the Particular Councils ; and it could not do so, for what would suit in one town is often not expedient in another ; thus, at Paris, a necessity has been felt for the Particular Council of the City to assemble every eight days ; and these repeated meetings have answered very well. In other places, on the contrary, fortnightly or monthly meetings are amply sufficient. The necessities of each town must, then, be taken into account ; but it is desirable, with the exception of the Councils which unite rural Conferences, that the meetings should not be held at a greater interval than a month, since a Council, to be useful, must be active

33. — The Secretary prepares the minutes of the meetings of the Council. He keeps a register of the names, Christian names, professions, and residences of the members of all the Conferences of the town, with the dates of their admission, and the names of their proposers. He also registers the native places of those who have not a fixed domicile in the town.

The points of detail which the 33rd Article enumerates ought to be carefully observed ; and experience has proved that none of these particulars is superfluous. Secretaries of Particular Councils ought, then, to take care of this matter, as should Secretaries of Conferences apply themselves to obtain correct and full lists of members and of the poor.

34. — The Treasurer has charge of the common fund of the town.

It follows that it is to the Council that he accounts. It is well that, as in the Conferences, these accounts should be audited yearly.

35. — The Conferences are represented in their Particular Council by their Presidents and Vice-Presidents. The Presidents of *Special Works* attend there to watch over the interests of these works. Each makes reports when invited to do by the President of the Council.

There is nothing to point out here but the final arrangement in this article, and to insist upon the usefulness of Reports being made frequently to the Council upon the state of the Conferences and of the works. These reports, although they ought always to be made in a simple style, yet keep interest thoroughly alive ; they prevent meetings from being dull or monotonous ; they afford the occasion to Councils to probe to the quick the Conferences and the works of the town, to give advice, to rectify usages that are defective, to extend such as are useful, and thus to form, by the force of example alone, a unity of heart and of mind among the different Conferences.

CHAPTER III

THE COUNCIL – GENERAL

36. — The Council–General is composed of a President, Vice–President, Secretary, Treasurer, and of several Councillors.

37. — The Council–General is the bond of all the Conferences — it maintains the unity of the Society. It watches over whatever can promote its prosperity. In this respect it adopts the course which it judges most useful.

The Council-General is the centre of the entire Society. It aggregates Conferences, institutes the Councils of different degrees, fixes their limits, pronounces, if there be occasion and in serious cases, the dissolution of Conferences and of Councils, adopts general decisions which extend to the whole Society, interprets or modifies the General Rule, as occasions arise, and directs all the Conferences through its correspondence, its circulars, and the *Bulletin*.

The Council-General grants Letters of Aggregation to the Conferences and *Letters of Institution* to the Particular, Central and Superior Councils. Those Councils which do not possess their *Letters of Institution* will do well to apply for them.

The Council-General also grants *Letters of Union* to Patronages and works of perseverance which desire to connect themselves with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and so to participate in the Indulgences which this union confers. It thus forms a religious bond between the Society and the persons who carry

on those works. evertheless, they can only acquire the title of members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul by participating in one of its Councils or in a Conference.

Its existence goes back to the origin of the Society, so soon as there were several Conferences; and its action has been successively developed according as the general interests of the institution have increased and have become of greater importance. The Circular of December, 1837, traces its history. The Rule devotes a chapter to its organisation. (See, with regard to the enumeration of the officers, the remark inserted at article 27.)

38. — It decides upon the distribution of the central fund. This fund is maintained by donations made to the Society, by collections made at the general meetings of the Society, and by contributions from the Conferences and Councils towards the general expenses of the Society.

Notwithstanding the strictest economy, it is not possible that the Society should not have some general expenses : every individual Conference, every Council necessarily has some; the Council-General, charged with representing the whole Society, with corresponding with its different branches spread all over the world, so to speak, could not escape this obligation, and of course feels it in a still higher degree. Hence the creation of a central treasury; but it is of the very essence of our work to restrain these expenses to what is strictly necessary, to do everything with simplicity, and, consequently, with economy, and to be sacredly sparing of the money of the poor in respect to everything which does not go *directly* to their relief. The spirit of the Society

would be deeply injured, and its success, perhaps, be compromised, on the day when these habits would be relinquished.

The 38th article places the annual offerings of each Conference and of each Council among the resources of the treasury of the Council-General. It is but just that the Conferences of Paris should not bear alone such expenses as relate to the whole Society, and that *each* Conference, having its share in the general expenditure, should have its share, too, in the means of providing for it. Some Conferences have of themselves decided that they would adopt, as the base of their annual contribution, the hundredth-part of their receipts; but, whatever may be the gratitude of the Council-General for that decision, on this subject nothing is prescribed by the Rule, nor even demanded by the Council-General; these gifts are entirely optional, and it appears that the more they are spontaneous, the more valuable they become.

Moreover, the purpose of the treasury of the Council-General is not merely to defray the expenses of correspondence and of administration. It ought, especially, to extend a helping hand to poor Conferences, for which temporary assistance is eminently useful. Every year the Council-General allots grants, which are unfortunately insufficient, either to Conferences which are organised in poor localities, and to which a small remittance of money is a valuable encouragement, or to those which, after existing for some time, are assailed by heavier necessity. Thus, many Conferences have been supported, upheld, preserved perhaps from the inefficiency into which they were about to fall. Alone, they would have succumbed; but feeling themselves sustained, they have regained courage, and they have imparted it to the poor whom they relieved, and to the rich who could give them co-operation.

But occasions arise of so serious a nature, that the treasury of the Council-General, which is always very inconsiderable, cannot succeed in affording a remedy for them. Thus after the inundations of the Rhone and of the Loire, during the famine in Ireland and that in German Lorraine, the wretchedness rose to such proportions that the united efforts of all the Conferences were required to bring some remedy for the evil. In such circumstances the Council-General first gives its own little contribution, and then makes an appeal to the Conferences, either a general appeal, if the misery be excessive or one limited to certain countries, if the misery be confined within a certain radius. There is cause to thank our good God for the result of these appeals, for they have been always received in the most charitable and the most fraternal spirit.

Finally, these general calls made upon the Conferences should be confined to very rare cases; for these exceptional means can we have recourse to profitably only so long as they are used with extreme discretion. Further, they ought to be made by the Council-General *only*. Otherwise, there would no longer be any regularity as to such appeals, and each being judge of the occasion, the result would be so great a multiplicity of calls, that irregularity would ensue.

The consequence of this (and perhaps it is not useless to recall it to mind) is that no Conference ought, *of its own accord and by itself*, transmit lottery tickets, circulars for subscriptions, requests for money, to the Conferences at large. In the district of a Particular, Central, or Superior Council, it can be done within that circumscription *with the assent of that Council;* but outside of that circumscription a general application can be made only through the intervention of the Council-Gene-

ral. This is at once the way to make important subscriptions succeed, and to prevent those being attempted which are not of that nature.

39. — The members of the Council-General are nominated by the President, with the advice of the Council.

According to an old custom, confirmed by a decision of the Council-General, under date of November 24th, 1851, it is for the Council-General to decide it there be occasion to nominate new members. When that decision is in the affirmative, the President-General, after having taken the advice of the Council, nominates the new members of the Council. (See on this subject the commentary given upon Article 31. The same principles are applicable here.)

No figure has been fixed for the number of members of the Council, since the necessity may vary according to circumstances, and with the increase of the Society it may be useful to call upon more fellow-workmen ; but, according to the spirit of the Rule, no more than the number of members that is really necessary should be introduced into the Council. It has always appeared that these duties ought to be active, and not simply honorary, and that if the members were too numerous, it would be less easy to preserve the necessary unity of purpose and of direction. In fact, the number of the members of the Council-General has been, for many years, between twenty and twenty-five.

The members of the Council-General are chosen, as a general rule, from among the Presidents or members of Conferences who have rendered most service to the Society, and who can devote most time and intelligence to general interests ; yet the

Council-General has always reserved to itself the liberty of calling into its body persons remarkable by reason of their piety and their love of good works, persons who honour our Society by coming to give their co-operation to it. But, it should be understood, that such a case ought to be a very rare exception, being caused by circumstances and by the qualities of the future members of the Council.

40. — When a President-General of the Society is to be appointed, the Council-General is convened by the Vice-President. This meeting is preparatory, its sole business being to deliberate as to the person who may be considered eligible for the office. If the former President be living, he is requested to designate some person whom he thinks it would be proper to select.

When the Council has deliberated upon one or more names, it adjourns for two months. In the interval, the proceedings of this preparatory meeting are made known to the Presidents of the Particular-Councils (1), who consult their colleagues, and to the Presidents of the Conferences, who consult their respective Councils, or even the Conferences over which they preside : all the Presidents transmit their opinions to the Council-General, and according to these opinions the Council-General makes the election ; an exact minute of which is recorded. While the election is pending,

1. At that period the term Particular Council meant all the Councils other than the Council-General. The proof of this is to be found in the actual terms of the Brief of His Holiness Gregory XVI of the 12th August 1845 : *Consilia particularia provinciarum sive urbium.*

all the members of the Society offer up, either in private or in their meetings, a special prayer to God, the *Veni Creator*, that His spirit may enlighten in the choice they are about to make.

The article indicates sufficiently the mode of election of the President-General, and there is no necessity for going into details. The important point is, to remind the Conferences of the necessity for prayer while that selection is being carried out; for the election is always a serious event in the Society, and the grace of God cannot be too much implored that a choice beneficial to the institution may be made, and that the candidate nominated may be worthy of the laborious charge to which he is called.

41. — The President-General convokes extraordinary meetings, and presides both in the Council-General and in all general meetings.

42. — The Secretary-General keeps a register of the names, Christian names, professions, residences, and dates of admission of the members; also of the officers of the Conferences, and of the places, days, and hours of the meetings. He prepares the minutes of the meetings of the Council-General, and of general meetings. He draws up an annual report on the state of the works of the Society. He is charged with the general correspondence with the Presidents or Secretaries of the several Councils or Conferences. He keeps the archives of the Society.

Owing to the growth of the Society it would be actually impossible for the Secretary general to keep

a general Register of all the members, but the names of the officers of the Conferences are to be mentionned every year in the statistical tables.

It should be mentioned that the correspondence ought to be arranged with the President-General or the Vice-President-General, delegated for that duty.

43. — The Treasurer–General has charge of the funds. He keeps a regular account of the receipts and disbursements, and submits his accounts to the Council–General.

44. — If the President–General himself cannot preside at the Council of Paris, he appoints a member of the Council–General to do so. He also, on the recommendation of the Secretary–General, appoints several members of the Council–General to the office of Vice–Secretaries.

Article 44 lays down a useful principle, one applicable in all cases where two Councils—as a General Council and Particular Council, an Upper Council and a Particular Council, a Central Council and a Particular Council, etc.—are together in the same town;—namely, that a member of the Council which is the highest in authority - either the President or a member delegated *ad hoc* by the President —should always be the one to preside in the Council of lower rank. Undoubtedly, bickerings and discussions about pre-eminence are little to be apprehended in a meeting for charitable purposes; but it would be so disagreable to have them raised that they must be avoided as much as possible, and the concentration of the Presidentship of the two Councils in the same person is one of the most effectual means of preventing discussions and chances of offence being taken.

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL MEETINGS

Something has been said already of General Meetings and of their utility : — it is now time to study their spirit and details more closely.

General meetings are the assembling together of many Conferences, where several of them exist in the same town, or even the assembling together of the active and honorary members of the sole Conference of a town. This point deserves to be well determined ; for many times isolated Conferences have thought that they could not hold general meetings unless by uniting themselves to some Conferences of the neighbouring localities, and that it would be impossible for them to hold general meetings by themselves alone. This notion is quite opposed to the practice of the Society which regards as a general meeting every more formal assembly, where, in the presence of the members, both active and honorary, and of the benefactors of the Conference, an account is given of the good works carried out, and of those which are contemplated. It would, moreover, be very unfortunate that it should be so : for, by omitting the general meeting, the Mass of the festival days would, perhaps, be omitted, the members would cease to meet for the purpose of praying together, so as to warm each other in piety ; or, at least, if they did not give up the pious meetings, they would lose the Plenary Indulgences of the four Festivals of the Society, which cannot be obtained but upon the double condition of communion and of assisting at the general meeting. —

(Brief of January 10th, 1845. — See the Circular of November 1st, 1849.)

Now it is beyond doubt that four yearly meetings present some difficulties in small towns; that it is not easy to collect together four times a year some members of the clergy, some persons strangers to the daily works of the Conferences, in order to lay before them results of little consequence; for this reason the Council-General has not ceased, for many years past, to recommend to neighbouring Conferences to make arrangements for holding general meetings in common : sometimes in one town, sometimes in another; it is partly for this reason, also, that it insists upon the organization of Central Councils by means of which this part of our Rule can be more easily carried into operation.

General Meetings are, in fact, very useful for reviving zeal; they interest they honorary members and the benefactors in the work sustained by their co-operation; they afford the opportunity of speaking to them of the poor, and of obtaining for the poor more powerful assistance; they form, too, for the Active Members, an occasion for reviewing the whole of their works, and of seeing how they could be improved. In every point of view they are, then, useful, and in towns were there are many Conferences they are necessary in order to keep up mutual relations. Yet care must be taken that they do not degenerate into mere formal meetings, and be made an occasion for speeches and eloquent displays, but that they remain what they ought always to be, a family meeting, somewhat more numerous than is usual, but ever humble, ever Christian, and full of simplicity.

45. — General meetings are held every year, on the 8th of December, the feast of the Immaculate

Conception of the Blessed Virgin; on the first Sunday of Lent; on the Sunday of the Good Shepherd (1) (the anniversary of the translation of the relics of Saint Vincent de Paul); and on the 19th of July, the feast of our patron Saint (2).

The President is empowered, moreover, to call extraordinary general meetings.

The dates fixed by the Rule for the general meetings ought to be scrupulously observed; and it would be very much to be regretted if isolated Conferences believed they could alter them. Is it not, in fact, touching to think that at the same periods all the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are assembled to speak of God, of their poor, and of their own sanctification? Are there not graces attached to this simultaneousness of prayers and of action? Yet it should be observed that the days indicated are not imperatively required by the Briefs, which allow some days' latitude for holding the four general meetings.

46. — The general meetings, like the Conferences, open with prayer and pious reading.

It is very useful to observe this arrangement, and it should never be departed from, on any pretext, lest, the general meetings may lose the mark of a Christian assembly. With this motive, the Council-General has always been of opinion that, if it is often useful to invite persons who are strangers to the Society, whether for the purpose of removing some

1. The second Sunday after Easter.

2. See, art. 57, the modifications made by the brief of March 18th 1859, and by the Rescript of 30th January 1888 as to the days in which some of these feasts must be celebrated.

prejudices, or of obtaining their co-operation, the prayer and pious reading should never, out of consideration to them, be omitted. If those persons have the misfortune of being such indifferent Christians as to be annoyed at this being done, it is much better not to invite them. It is of little consequence that our meetings should be brillant ; but it is of very great consequence that they should preserve their religious character.

47. — The Secretary having first read the minutes of the preceding meeting, calls aloud the members admitted into the different Conferences since the last general meeting, and whose names have been remitted to him for this purpose by the different Presidents. These members rise — the Secretary presents them to the Society and the President, who addresses them in a few words.

The actual presentation of the members to the meeting and to the President, has become almost impossible in practice at pretty numerous general meetings. Disorder and confusion would result from carrying it out. But when the meeting is not very large, it is well to keep to this custom, which is a good proof of the spirit of brotherhood, and which is very old.

48. — The Presidents of Conferences report on the state of their Conferences. A summary abstract of each report, containing the changes of members and of poor families, the total receipts, with the amount and items of the expenditure, is deposited in the hands of the Secretary.

This article cannot now be followed literally, except at general meetings where few Conferences come together : it would, in fact, be impossible that ten or twelve Presidents, sometimes even forty or fifty, should come forward in succession to give accounts of the works of their Conferences ; it is then necessary that they should forward to the Secretary their notes upon the material points, and that the latter, either himself or through another member, should draw up a complete statement.

Further, whatever may be the form of the report, an essential point is that it should contain edifying facts, of a nature to excite zeal, and above all, that it should not be a panegyric of the Society. The praises which a work receives outside, are often the cause of great danger to it; but the panegyrics which it pronounces on itself, are proof that the Christian spirit has departed from it.

49. — The Secretary then reads letters from those Conferences which have not been able to send a representative to the meeting. He also reads extracts of any other letters which may interest the Society.

50. — The President then announces the measures taken by the Council of Direction for the good of the Society, and, if necessary, solicits the advice of the meeting.

The last part of the article is entirely optional, as the expression "*if necessary*" shows. In fact, general meetings having become very numerous, it would be difficult now to take their opinions, in towns more especially.

51. — The President, or any member of the Society invited by him, addresses the meeting in a few words of Christian and charitable exhortation.

The address here referred to, and which occurs sometimes at the commencement, sometimes at the close of the meetings, should be short, simple, and practical. It should not be either a theoretical discussion, since such matter is not the purpose of the Society; or a sermon, since that would be misplaced in the mouth of a layman. But if it is made so as to present the special wants of the Society, if it points out carefully the difficulties to avoid in this or that work, if it encourages zeal and devotion, it may really contribute to the charitable life of the Conferences.

The Society considers itself fortunate when persons eminent for their character, their virtue, and their knowlegde, are good enough to be present upon the invitation of the President at the general meeting, and to close it, as has been said, with some edifying remarks.

The general meetings are, as much as possible, held under the presidency of a bishop or parish priest, or of a clergyman remarkable for his piety and virtues. It is an honour and a happiness for the disciples of St. Vincent de Paul to be able to relate their feeble labours to their fathers in the faith and their guides in Christian works; and when, against their will, they are deprived of such presence, their meetings lose the greatest part of their charm and of their interest.

The rule is,—and this rule justifies itself too well

to need being insisted upon,—that the places of honour at the meeting belong, of right, to the clergy, and that the lay President does no more than direct the arrangements of the meeting. It is to their Lordships the bishops, when they are so good as to come amongst us, or to the priests whom they select as their substitutes, that the first places, above the lay Council, belong. This is a testimony, a very trifling, but a very legitimate one, which Christians owe to the ministers of God, and which should never be forgotten. — (See the Circular of May 31st, 1846.)

52. — After the collection and usual prayers, the meeting closes.

CHAPTER V

THE DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

53. — Besides its active members, the Society has corresponding members, honorary members and subscribers.

Another category of members has, for many years past, been added to those stated in the Rule — the *aspirant Members*. These Members are chosen from amongst young men under eighteen years of age; sometimes they are joined to ordinary Conferences, whose labours they take part in under the direction of the elder members; sometimes they are sufficiently numerous to be organised into special Conferences, either in Catechism classes for adults (*Catéchismes de persévérance*), or in Christian

Colleges or Seminaries. This institution, whatever may be the mode adopted, is very valuable ; besides that it gives useful auxiliaries to the Conferences, and provides for recruiting them among young people growing up, it trains the young to the spirit of charity and of zeal, and suggests to them the very natural desire of becoming Active Members of Conferences when they shall have arrived at the proper age. The Brief of January 10th, 1845, makes Aspirant Members participators in the Indulgences of the Society, and the Council-General has published a special instruction for the Conferences of Colleges and Institutions. (See the Bulletin for May, 1853, and the following pages.)

54. — A member changing his residence and going to a place where there is no Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, does not thereby cease to belong to the Society ; — he becomes a *corresponding member;* he puts himself in communication with the Conference or Conferences of the town of his diocese nearest to his residence, and corresponds with the Secretary of the Council or of the Conference of that town. Should there be no Conference in his diocese, he corresponds with the Secretary-General.

The Circular of November 1st, 1849, comments upon this article as follows : —

" It is time to turn this article, hitherto a dead letter, so to speak, into actual practice. But the great difficulty consists in drawing closely togethe the relations between the corresponding members and the Conferences, and in giving something to do to these members as well as to the Conferences, in order to keep up the relations when once they have

been opened. Now, if every isolated member communicated, as the Rule points out, with the Conference of his diocese (or, in countries where that organization exists, with the Superior or the Central Council), if he were received in the capacity of *corresponding members,* if he sent his offering to it regularly, and received in return the funds necessary for succouring, *in the name of the Conference,* the poor of the locality where he is living ; if he transmitted, at certain periods, a report upon the families — upon their moral and material condition — much advantage would result from it to all parties; in the first place, to the Corresponding Members, who, in this organization, would recover the incentive of association, of which they were deprived, and in this way would escape from the isolation in which they were in regard to the Society ; to the Conferences in the neighbourhood, who would have the germ of a body of devoted members ready to dispose of in the country, lottery tickets and collection circulars, to circulate reports, almanacs, and good books ; to the entire Society, which, by becoming better known, would spread itself more easily in a great number of small towns, of extensive hamlets, and even of villages; in fine, to the poor in the country, who would receive some additional succour, and, what is more important, would obtain more persons to serve them.

"If this plan be not adopted, here is a more simple way of arriving at the same end, but a less perfect one, as it seems to me. You have doubtless remarked, Sir and dear Brother, in the Brief of January 10th, 1845, a very striking arrangement : the permission bestowed upon isolated members of gaining the Indulgences granted to Conferences, upon the condition of accomplishing, so far as is in their power, the ordinary works of the Society.

Every one then is stimulated to devote himself to the task ; the common Father of the faithful invites us to it, urges us himself to it, and points out to us the way. Now, if every isolated member, during the leisure of the Vacation, followed this valuable direction, how much good would result for himself, and for the poor who were about him ! Let us multiply only by two poor people who had received assistance, the number of our brothers who, every year, leave us to settle themselves in the country, or who spend there some months, even some weeks, and we shall be surprised at the blessed harvest which it will be given us to gather in. "

He receives every year a report on the works of the Society, and maintains with it a communion both of prayers and good works, by doing whatever works of charity he can, and by advancing the interests of the Society whenever he has an opportunity.

" In a word, is it desired, Sir and dear Brother, that these works, isolated indeed, but which, if my appeal were heard, would not be without their importance, should propagate and endure ? One precaution is necessary, namely, to maintain between the Society and the Corresponding Members constant relations such as Article 54 of the Rule points out. The Bulletin of the Society, moreover, affords greater facilities for these relations now than at the commencement of our Conferences ; following each of us into his own home, it comes at certain and frequent periods to point out the progress of Conferences, to indicate to us the dangers to be shunned, the examples to be followed, and thus it may contribute to connect with our charitable proceed-

ings the members whom distance separates from us.

"The hope of seeing these members become the most assiduous readers of the *Bulletin,* has even been one inducement to undertake this laborious work."

55. — Honorary members do not assist at the ordinary meetings of the Conferences. They are invited, like the ordinary members, to all other meetings. They are to send every year a special contribution to the Treasurer of the Council or Conference of their town.

As a general Rule, the Honorary Members do not assist at the ordinary meetings of the Conferences; for there would then be cause to ask ourselves why they, taking part in the weekly meetings, should withdraw themselves from the labours of their brothers; yet, whenever they desire to assist at the meetings, it has never been in the spirit of the Society to refuse them admission, since then there is room to hope that they will gain a taste for our works, and will wish to devote themselves to them. But, on the one hand, this cannot be the general rule, and on the other, it is to be remarked that whenever they are admitted to the ordinary meetings, they are not to have a deliberative voice. To act otherwise would often be to leave the decision of questions of grave interest to the Conferences, to persons who are not so versed in all their details, as to possess the spirit of them so well as the Active Members.

But, if the presence of Honorary Members at the ordinary meetings of the Conferences be not the Rule, on the contrary their being summoned, as well to the general meetings as to the Masses and

pious ceremonies of the Conferences, such as sermons, retreats, etc., is decidedly the Rule.

Differently from the Active Members, who bestow their donations upon their Conferences under the form of secret collections, honorary members are obliged, by force of circumstances, to transmit their offerings in the form of fixed subscriptions. The Rule does not state that their subscriptions should be the same for every one nor do the Briefs of Indulgences bear this meaning.

In the towns where there is a Particular Council, the Rule decides that the offering of the honorary members should be handed over to that Council. This is a mode of creating funds for it, and thence establishing among the Conferences a sort of equality for the distribution of aid, notwithstanding the inequality of misery.

This provision of the Rule is, nevertheless, not so imperative that a Particular Council may not give over to the Conferences the product of the subscriptions of honorary members. The Conferences will have all the greater zeal for recruiting honorary members if they hope to profit by their subscriptions.

The forms of admission are the same for ordinary and honorary members; where several Conferences are established in a town, honorary members are admitted by the Particular Council.

This point is of very great importance, and unfortunately it is very little observed : at one time Honorary Members are confounded with Subscribers, and no more is required of them than an alms, more or less large, without any consideration being paid to their religious habits; at another time the deno-

mination of " honorary " is given to Active Members who have been a long time without coming to the Conference, and yet about whom there is some hesitation as to erasing their names. Sometimes even ladies have been enrolled as Honorary Members. All these customs are contrary to the Rule, and ought to be entirely laid aside; for the Honorary Members are actually *members of the Society*, according to the terms of the Rule. When they wish to become Active Members, it is very difficult as a matter of fact, if not perhaps as a matter of right, to refuse it to them; they assist at the festivals, at the Masses, at the general meetings of the Conferences; they are entitled to very extensive Indulgences; whence the conclusion, that to be admitted, they ought to be within the conditions which the Society imposes on its Active Members; otherwise there would be too great a difference between those two classes of members; and if the one were practical Christians, and the other persons who pay little attention to things of a religious character, would there not be reason to fear that in the end the spirit of the Conference might grow cold as a result of this very dissimilarity, and of the perhaps too great deference which the Active members might wish to show towards the Honorary Members ?

Besides the Honorary Members, there is another class of members which the Rule does not mention, but which the Circular of May 31st 1846, informs us of under the name of Members of Honour *(membres d'honneur)* — they are the clergy who desire to honour the Conferences by the insertion of their names upon our roll, and whom it seems to be much more respectful to designate under the title of Members of Honour *(membres d'honneur)*, than under that of *honorary members.*

56. — Every Conference may have, moreover, simple subscribers — these are not members of the Society, but are entitled as benefactors to its prayers.

This article does away with the last objections which might remain against the decision of the preceding article upon the conditions required of Honorary Members: for it points out the modes of making useful to the poor the generosity of those persons, men or women, who wish to bestow their alms upon the Conferences, and who, because they do not fulfil the religious conditions, or by reason of their sex, cannot, according to the Rule, be admitted as Honorary Members. Subscribers, not being members of the Society, may be received from among persons of every religious opinion, and this latitude cannot lead to any inconvenience.

Many Conferences turn to use, in a way which is very profitable to the poor, the zeal of lady-benefactresses, either as collectors or for the wardrobe or the employment of the poor, or for some works in which the Conferences cannot engage in a direct manner. Such zeal deserves to be imitated.

CHAPTER VI

THE FESTIVALS OF THE SOCIETY

57. — The Society celebrates the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, its Patron. The Conferences assist in a body at Mass, on the 8th of December and 19th of July, and also on the an-

niversary of the translation of the relics of St. Vincent de Paul.

According to the Brief of January 10th, 1845, the festivals should be celebrated on the very day of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, the 8th of December, and on that of the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, the 19th of July. If the day were changed, the Indulgences could no longer be obtained. As actual difficulties often arose, as to Conferences, and particularly those in the country, fulfilling these conditions, the result unhappily was that a great number of Conferences were deprived of the Indulgences which the Common Father of the Faithful has dispensed to us with such great liberality. To remedy this inconvenience, the Council-General has solicited of the Sovereign Pontiff a modification of the Brief of the 10th January, 1845, and the extension of these precious favours, which it has obtained by a third Brief, bearing date the 18th of March, 1853, is as follows :—

1st. The Plenary Indulgences granted by the Brief of the 10th of January, 1845, for the 8th of December, can be obtained at the Masses specially celebrated for the Society, either on the very day of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, or on the day to which it is transferred in the diocese.

2nd. The Plenary Indulgence granted by the Brief of the 10th of January, 1845, for the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, can be obtained, either on the 19th of July, or during the seven days which follow it.

3rd. The Plenary Indulgence granted for the feast of the Translation (1) can be obtained either on the

1. The second Sunday after Easter is the feast of the Translation of the relics of Saint Vincent de Paul. — See Brief of His Holiness Gregory XVI of 10th January 1845.

day of the feast or on one of the seven days which follow it.

For precise information as to the manner in which the Indulgences may be gained it is indispensable that the actual text of the Pontifical Briefs and Rescripts should be consulted.

On these days the members pray for the prosperity of the Catholic Church, for the increase of charity amongst men, and to draw down the blessings of God on the work in which they are associated. Should any member be absent from the locality, or otherwise prevented from attending, he assists in spirit at least with his brethren, and prays for them as they pray for him.

The observance of the festivals of the Society is one of the obligations with which we ought to be most deeply impressed. How, in fact, can the members of Conferences hope to see their labours prosper, if they do not beseech God to bless them, and what more powerful means of obtaining this blessing is there, than to ask it all together, united by the same prayer and the same faith, at the foot of the same altar? Besides how is it possible to make up for the union of hearts, which is the result of these pious practices and one of their most precious results? Without the festivals of the Society, the ties which mutually bind the Conferences together would be very quickly loosened, and the material means which have been pointed out many times already would soon become useless for the want of spiritual means, those blessed by the Church. It is, therefore, of the very highest importance that every Conference, and in every Conference every member, should observe the four festivals of the Society as scrupulously as is

possible; for we are not afraid of asserting that a member, however zealous, however Christian like he may be in other respects, does not possess the true spirit of the Society, if he voluntarily neglects to observe its feasts, and that a Conference which falls into this danger sees in a short time the spirit of St. Vincent of Paul grow weaker, and become extinct within it.

The situation of the member absent from the locality or otherwise prevented from attending the mass and the general meeting with his brothers has been modified by the Rescript of the 30th January 1888. It results from that Rescript that the same Indulgences may be obtained by that member, if he has been prevented from attending on account of serious illness or habitual infirmity, by performing some other work of piety assigned to him by his confessor. (See the text of the Rescript.)

58. — The day after the general meeting in Lent, all the members of the Society assist in a body at the *Requiem* Mass, which is offered in the town for the repose of the souls of the deceased members of the Society (1).

The religious care of the dead is one of the conditions of the existence of a lasting work, and in

1. The original form of this article was modified by the Council General in accordance with the Brief of the 13th September 1859, which transferred to the first Sunday of Lent the Plenary Indulgence previously granted for assisting at the Mass of the first Monday of Lent; now by virtue of the extension granted by the Rescript of the 30th January 1888, as explained by the letter of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences dated 15th July 1888, it is no longer only on the first Sunday of Lent that this Indulgence can be gained but on any one of the seven days following.

Christianity it is so rigorous a duty, that to omit it is in some sort to fail in one of the principal obligations of the Christian life. Accordingly the Rule has expressly recommended it; and thus the usage has since been established of reciting during the meeting of the Conference, the *De profundis* for the members lately deceased, and of having Mass celebrated for the repose of their souls. Some Conferences, not content with the anniversary of the first Sunday in Lent, add to it that of the Commemoration of the dead. The Brief of the 10th of January, 1845, recompenses by a special Indulgence the act of attending at Masses for the deceased members.

OBSERVATION

59. — None of the preceding rules impose any obligation of conscience, but the Society relies for their fulfilment on the zeal of its members, and their love of God and their neighbour.

RULES

OF THE

SUPERIOR COUNCILS

(Extract from the *Bulletin* of the 1st of May 1850.)

For many years the really providential extension of the Society has, in the countries situated outside France, rendered an institution necessary which our first rules did not anticipate, viz., the establishment of Councils charged with the direction of the Conferences of an entire country, and constituted as intermediate between the Council-General, the centre of the whole Society, and the Conferences separated from it by distance, language, and local customs.

This institution, self-begotten so to speak, has become happily extended and has contributed, by its development, to the progress of our Work in foreign countries, where otherwise it would have penetrated with difficulty, and where particularly it would have supported itself with still greater difficulty. In their turn, England, Ireland, Belgium, Holland, Rhenish Prussia, Mexico, Canada, Spain, Italy and many other countries have seen such Councils established within their bosom; and as a result of this organization, the Conferences of these different countries have been formed with greater facility in a common spirit, and have been multiplied in a more rapid manner. Ex-

perience was then conclusive, and the moment was come for incorporating into our written rules a collection of regulations applicable to these Councils : these rules form arrangements which, without infringing upon usages already venerable in some portions of the Society, and confirmed moreover by the Council-General, without being even a code, invariable and absolute for the future, yet may serve as a guide and as a model for Councils as they are successively formed.

With this idea the Council-General has drawn up a series of articles in addition to the Rule; but before adopting them definitively, it desired to receive information from the good advice of the Councils of Europe, that is to say, of those which time and distance allowed to consult. This advice did not fail the Council-General, to whom it has been most valuable; it has most certainly contributed to improve so important a Rule.

The regulations which we are about to explain briefly and the text of which we give further on, form a summary of local usages, and of the chapters of the General Rules relative to Particular Councils and to the Council-General itself. The Councils are, in fact, intermediate between the Particular Councils of a town, entrusted with the interests of Conferences in a city, and the Council-General charged with the direction of all the Conferences. Their functions, as their nature, ough then to possess something reciprocal, and this idea has been uppermost in the preparation of the Rules respecting them.

At the very commencement, a primary question arose, as to the name to be given to these Councils. Should they be designated in the Rule under the title of Provincial Councils, as the two Briefs of the 10th of February and 12th of August, 1845, had done?

Powerful reasons weighed in favour of this expression, one already old among us, and accepted by most of the Councils; but the apprehension which was manifested, that in many countries it would awaken national susceptibilities dangerous to the Society, has induced us to adopt a new denomination—that of Superior Councils.

The circumscription of the Superior Councils, and the place of their seat, are points which the first article of this Rule hands over to the Council-General, by virtue of the delegation which it hands over to them of a part of its own right. It is practice, converted purely and simply into a written rule.

The third Article treats of an important question, —the constitution itself of the Superior Council. After having well considered it, and weighed the different opinions expressed, it has been judged preferable to summon all the Conferences (whom the Superior Council is to unite) to co-operate in its formation, in order thereby to make its authority greater. This co-operation may take place, either by means of delegates, chosen in equal numbers by each Conference, or by means of correspondence, according to local circumstances, and finally, it is sufficient for the validity of the constitution of the Council, that all the Conferences should be *summoned* to take part in it; it is not necessary that they should actually have done so, if they neglect to reply to the summons. To establish greater order, the election should be directed by the Particular Council established in the town where the Superior Council is to have its seat, or by the Conference of that town, if a Particular Council is not as yet in existence.

The 4th Article reproduces for the nomination of the President of the Superior Council, a mode which is analogous to that adopted for the nomination of the President-General, and of which experience has

shown the advantages. But the delay of two months is reduced to one month, as the circumscription is less extended.

The 8th Article anticipates the case where there are in the same town a Superior Council and a Particular Council. In such a case it is decided that the Presidentship of the Particular Council belongs by right to the President of the Superior Council; but the latter may delegate it if he deem it necessary. This point has been already settled by the General Rule as to Paris, where both the Council-General and the Particular Council of the town assemble, and it has been sanctioned by fifteen years' experience. It has, then, appeared useful to extend it here to the cases in which multiplicity of affairs, or any other reason, would prevent, as in many towns, the function of the Particular Council being entrusted to the Superior Council.

The 10th Article affirms the unvarying judical powers of the Council-General, relative to the admission of Conferences into our Society. It is for the Council-General to pronounce upon their aggregation, having, however, taken the advice of the Superior Councils.

This mode, while preserving the common spirit, —the unity which is indispensable, associates the Local Councils in the development of our charitable family; it provides against the diversity of regulations, it consolidates our little—our wholly brotherly plan of government, whilst preventing the admission, without any due cause, of new Conferences who come to ask the rights of fellowship amongst us.

These happy relations of fraternity and union are still more closely cemented by the 12th Article, which, by summoning the Presidents of the Superior Council into the bosom of the Council-General, by

giving them the right to take their places there, when they are at Paris, by suggesting that when they are absent, their advice upon grave questions by means of written communications, be taken, assures thus to the whole Society the concurrence of their intelligence, their devotion, and their charity. The first trial made of this combination previous to drawing up the present Rule, has already sufficiently proved its use in the eyes of the Council-General.

Let us conclude by two observations :—

1st. The Articles which are about to be perused form henceforth part of the General Rule ; they have been inserted in it; but it has appeared preferable not to blend them into the body of the Rule itself, and not to alter the order, now an old one, of the Articles; to touch it would have been to introduce disagreeable confusion and to change in some degree a record venerated in our Society, since it is almost contemporaneous with its foundation. Moreover, the authority of these new arrangements will not, on this account, be less in the eyes of our Conferences and of all our brothers.

2nd. The present Rule is applicable to Councils now existing abroad whose mission it is to direct the Conferences belonging to distinct nations. But it is not, and it has not been, an obstacle to the formation of Councils of a more limited circumscription, which become, and are daily becoming, more necessary for binding closely together among themselves the Conferences which are situated near one another. Far from this being the case, it is for such Conferences a model and a basis for organization.

The following, then, is the text of this Rule, adopted by the Council-General at its meeting of the 1st of April, 1850 : —

Art. 1. — When the Conferences of a more extensive circumscription than that of a Particular Council, desire to be united by a Council, a Superior Council may be constitued for this purpose, conformably to the terms of the Brief of our Holy Father, Pope Gregory XVI, dated January the 10th, 1845. This Council is named after the circumscription for which it is established, and which is determined by the Council-General; its seat is fixed by the Council-General.

This Council, within its circumscription, is the representative of the Council-General, which forms the centre of the whole Brotherhood, and it governs all the Councils and Conferences already established, or which may be established there. Its object is to preserve the unity and spirit of the Society; it forms the natural and usual link of correspondence between the Councils and Conferences with the Council-General.

2. — The Superior Council consists of a President, of one or more Vice-Presidents, of a Secretary, a Treasurer, one or several Vice-Secretaries, a Vice-Treasurer, and of several Councillors (1).

3. — When the President is to be named for the first time, all the Conferences of the circumscription are invited to assist in doing so. The election shall take place under the superintendence of the Conference or Council belonging to the town wherein the Superior Council is to be established.

1. And in some Countries of a Spiritual Director appointed by the Bishop of the Diocese in which that Superior Council holds its meetings.

4. — When a new President is to be named, the Vice-President assembles the Council. This preparatory sitting is devoted to deliberation as to the person who may be eligible for this office. If the former President be still alive, he is envited to designate the person whom he should deem it of advantage to select.

When the members have come to an understanting upon one or several names, the meeting adjourns for a month; during the interval the proceedings of this preparatory meeting are made known to the Presidents of the Particular Councils, who consult their colleagues, and to the Presidents of the Conferences, who consult their respective Councils, or even the Conferences over which they preside; all the Presidents transmit their opinions to the Council, and according to these opinions the Council proceeds to the election; an exact minute of which is recorded.

While the election is pending, all the members of the circumscription address, either in private or at the meetings, a special prayer to God, such as the *Veni Creator*, in order that His Spirit may guide them throughout the intended election.

5. — The members of the Superior Council are named, as well as those of the Board, by the President, with the advice of the Council.

6. — The President presides over the Superior Council, and over the General Meetings of the Conferences of the town where it is established. He convenes extraordinary meetings. In case of absence, his place is supplied by the Vice-President,

or even, if necessary, by any other member of the Council.

7. — The Secretary keeps an account of the names, Christian names, professions, residences, and dates of reception of the different members of the Conferences belonging to the town where the Superior Council holds its sittings. He also notes down the persons who form the Board of the Councils, or of the Conferences of the circumscription, as well as the places where, and days and hours when, they hold their sittings.

He draws up the minutes of the sittings held by the Council, and General Meetings; prepares the annual report upon the works of the Conferences of the circumscription, and transmits it to the Council-General. He is entrusted, under the superintendence of the President, with the general correspondence that is kept up with the Presidents and Secretaries of the Councils and Conferences as well as with the Council-General. He has the custody of the records of the Society in that circumscription.

The Treasurer has the care of the funds. He keeps an exact account of the receipts and expenditure; he submits his accounts to the Council.

8. — In case the Superior Council does not fulfil. for the local Conferences, the office of a Particular Council, the presidency of the latter devolves by right on the President of the Superior Council, who names the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Conferences and Special Works, as also the Board of the Particular Council.

In case of any impediment, his presidency over the Particular Council is supplied by a member of the Superior Council, whom he delegates for that purpose.

9. — The funds of the Council are maintained by extraordinary donations made to the Society, by collections at the General Meetings of the town in which it is established, and by the contributions which are annually sent by each Conference, or by each Council of the circumscription, towards the general expenses.

10. — When a Conference or Particular Council is about to be formed in the circumscription, the Superior Council examines how far it may be proper to propose its aggregation to the Council-General. This aggregation can never take place but with the previous advice of the Superior Council.

It likewise refers to the Council-General, when it is deemed necessary to dissolve any particular Conference or Council. In a case of urgency, it may temporarily suspend the sittings, and refer the matter to the Council-General.

11. — The Superior Council governs all the practical details of the Conferences in the circumscription, either through the medium of correspondence or of circulars from the President, and watches over the observance of the Rules, reserving, however, to the Council-General weighty questions, and such as may concern the welfare of the Society at large.

12. — The Presidents of the Superior Councils,

when present in Paris, attend at and take part in the sittings of the Council-General, of which they are members, as long as they continue to fill the same office.

The Council-General may ask for their opinion in writing upon such matters as interest the whole Society.

RULES

OF THE

CENTRAL COUNCILS [1]

It is important to point out clearly the differences that distinguish *Central* Councils from *Superior* Councils and *Particular* Councils.

The *Particular* Council, as we have seen, is simply a delegation formed of representatives from the Conferences of the same town: a delegation upon which is conferred, by the very fact of its establishment, certain prerogatives of which the Conferences are deprived for its advantage. Of these prerogatives the most important is the nomination of the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Conferences. Because of the fact that the Conferences thus surrender a part of their autonomy, it will be seen that the action of a Particular

1. In applying the following Regulations to the case of a Central Council situated within the circumscription of a Superior Council, it will be necessary to read " Council-General " as " Superior Council " in every place in which the term occurs throughout the Articles except in the sentence,—" its seat and circumscription are fixed by the Council-General "—in the first paragraph of the first Article.

Council ought not extend too far. It could not, without inconvenience, go beyond the suburbs or district over which is felt the influence of a town.

If this is to be so the Council-General and the Superior Council, both located at the seat of Government, of a State or of a large Province will be too far removed from the Particular-Councils or the isolated Conferences. Hence the necessity of intermediate machinery.

Thus Councils designed to facilitate the connection of the Particular Councils or the Conferences with the Council General and Superior Councils are established in large towns or circumscriptions rich in Conferences. These *Councils*, to which has been given the name of *Central*, have become the principal instruments for the establishment of new Conferences, while they at the same time devote their attention to the maintenance of our rules and of the spirit of the Society.

These Councils have gradually increased in number, and the Council-General looks forward to the time when it will be possible to establish one in every diocese. It will be sufficient for that purpose if there be three or four Conferences in the diocese.

In countries where there is no Superior Council, the *Central* Councils correspond with the Council General. Where a Superior Council exists the Central Councils are placed under its juridiction.

Art. 1.—When it becomes advisable to unite by a Council the Conferences within a more extended circumscription than that of a Particular Council,

there may be instituted for this purpose a Central Council, conformably to the conditions of the Brief of our Holy Father, Pope Gregory XVI, of January 10th, 1845. This Council takes the name of the city in which it is established. Its seat and its circumscription are fixed by the Council-General.

It represents, within its circumscription, the Council-General—the centre of the whole Society—and has jurisdiction over all Councils or Conferences already established, or which may be subsequently formed ; it maintains the spirit and the unity of the Society ; it is the natural and ordinary channel of correspondence between the Councils and Conferences, and the Council-General.

This Article presents several points for comment : —

1st. Central Councils are instituted by the Council-General, which fixes their circumscription after having taken the advice of the Conferences that are to be embraced within it : but, at the same time, it is an invariable Rule never to institute a Central Council until the respective Right Rev. Bishop have approved, and directly authorized the measure. In the preliminary observations on the constitution of the Society, it is laid down that "we will never undertake anything new or important, within any ecclesiastical jurisdiction, without first asking the advice of the Ordinary." In so important a step we surely could not be unfaithful to this fundamental principle of our Conferences.

2nd. The geographical boundary of these Councils may be changed by the Council-General ; but the

same formalities are to be observed as those followed in instituting them.

If, for instance, Conferences should be multiplied, within the jurisdiction of any one Council, to such an extent as to require two or three Councils in place of a single one, the welfare of the Society should not be hindered by an organization whose sole object is the general good.

Lastly. It is to be remarked that if the Central Council is the natural and usual channel of correspondence between Councils and Conferences, and the Council-General, it by no means follows that the direct correspondence of Conferences with the Council-General ought to be abandoned. This correspondence has formed a connection too pleasant to be broken, or even enfeebled. New communications may be opened between neighbouring branches; but those which exist should not be suppressed.

Art. 2.—The Central Council is composed of a President, of one or more Vice-Presidents, of a Secretary, of a Treasurer, of one or several Assistant Secretaries, of an Assistant Treasurer, of the Presidents of the Particular Councils within its circumscription, and of several Councillors, chosen from among the Presidents or members of the Conferences of the city where it is located, or within its jurisdiction.

Article 2 modifies the former usage, with respect to members of Central Councils. Heretofore, the Presidents of all the Conferences within the circumscription were members of the Central Council.

That plan, although useful in the infancy of the Society, became soon almost impracticable from the

multiplication of Conferences : for the Presidents of the distant Councils, and especially those of rural Conferences, being very numerous, could not frequently leave home; hence the meetings of the Council were soon reduced to two or three annually. In this state of things the Central Councils became rather nominal than real institutions : and although their numbers were large on paper, their natural efficiency was limited to two or three yearly sittings, at which none save their own Board attended. And yet it is the duty of such Councils to busy themselves about the interests of their Conferences throughout the whole year; there are aggregations to be prepared, advice to be given in cases laid before them by the Conferences, dangers to be indicated, and examples worthy of imitation to be pointed out. It is necessary, therefore, that at their sittings there should be a full attendance of members, so that from their numbers a moral weight may be given to their proceedings and to their decisions. It is for this reason that Article 2, in addition to the Board, creates several Councillors, who may be selected either from the city where the Council sits, or from other points within its circumscription. Moreover, the Presidents of Particular Councils are members by right. These latter Councils are now established, not only in cities, but even in the country, in order to bind together adjacent Conferences; as, for instance, those of a canton or several neighbouring Parishes. As it devolves upon them to give life and activity to those Conferences, naturally feeble both in resources and numbers, they are of real importance; and it behoves the Presidents of those Conferences to be present at the sittings of the Central Council that they may represent their Conferences.

The holding of the general meetings of the circumscription is in no way hindered by the present

organization of the Central Councils. On the contrary, such meetings are provided for in several articles of the present regulations. Such assemblies can be preceded by a special meeting of the Presidents or delegates, in which improvements can be mutually suggested, advice asked or given, and the details of what is done in each Conference communicated; and although such meetings may be informal, and not be intended to give formal decisions, they will not, on that account, be the less intimate and cordial, the less useful or effective in drawing closer the relations of brotherhood.

The members of the Council—other than those who form the Board, and the Presidents of Particular Councils—will, in practice, be selected in the city where the Central Council sits; but they also may be chosen from other Conferences of the circumscription. Members, in fact, should not form part of the Council simply to give advice but to take an active part in its proceedings; and one of the most useful services they can render would be to visit neighbouring Conferences—those which are being organized, with the view of infusing into them the spirit of brotherhood and friendly acquaintance, both so useful and so precious.

Art. 3.—When, for the first time, a President is to be chosen, the appointment is made by the Council-General.

This article is the application of a usage, existing since the first organization of Central Councils. In fact, when, for the first time a President is to be chosen, the Conferences not having had any relations with one another, any advice on the choice of a President of the Central Council would be impossible

from the want of sufficient information on the part of the greater number.

When a Central Council is established in the jurisdiction of a Superior Council, it is the duty of the Superior Council to make the nomination.

Art. 4.—When, at any subsequent period, a new President is to be chosen, the Council is convoked by the Vice-President. This sitting, which is preparatory, is devoted entirely to a deliberation upon the person most proper to be selected for the office. The former President, if alive, is requested to designate that person, whom, in his opinion, it would be most desirable to elect.

When one or several names are agreed upon, the Council transmits the minutes of this first sitting to the Council-General, which duly offers its advice in relation thereto. After receiving this advice, a month's ajournment takes place, and the names agreed upon, are, in the interval, submitted to the Presidents of the Particular Councils within the circumscription, who consult their colleagues in reference thereto; and to the Presidents of Conferences, who consult their Boards, and even the Conferences over which they preside. The one and the other transmit to the Central Council the result of their consultations, which then proceeds to the election, after which it causes an exact report of the proceedings to be drawn up.

Whilst the election is pending, all the members of the circumscription offer up, either in private or at the sittings, the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, as a special prayer to God, to direct by His Holy Spirit the choice about to be made.

The mode of election pointed out above is very nearly a reproduction of the Rule followed in selecting the President-General, and the Presidents of Superior Councils. The Central Council prepares the election : then consults the Conferences and Particular Councils; and finally, after being enlightened by their advice, proceeds to an election. The only point of difference is, that the Council-General is consulted on the election that is to take place. The proximity of Conferences in France to the Council-General explains the propriety of this rule, which, in the case of Superior Councils situated in foreign countries, could not well be placed among the regulations governing them.

When a Central Council is established within the jurisdiction of a Superior Council it is the latter Council that ought to be consulted on the election of President of the Central Council and not the Council General.

Art. 5.—The members of the Central Council, excepting the Presidents of Particular Councils who are members in their own right, as well as the officers constituting the Board, are appointed by the President.

Art. 6.—The President presides at the sittings of the Central Council, and also at the general meetings of the Conferences of the city where it is situated. To him, also, belongs the right to preside at the general meetings of the whole circumscription. He calls extraordinary meetings. In case of absence, he causes his place to be supplied by one of the Vice-Presidents, and even, in case of need, by another member of the Council.

Art. 7.—In case the Central Council does not fulfil, for the Conferences of the city where it is located, the functions of a Particular Council, the presidency of the latter devolves by right upon the President of the Central Council, as also the appointment of the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Conferences and Special Works, and Board of the Particular Council.

In case of difficulty he has his place as President of the Particular Council taken by a member of the Central Council chosen for the purpose.

From the fact that the Central Council fulfils in certain towns the office of a particular Council, it has been sometimes inferred that the Presidents of the various Conferences of the circumscription were to be appointed by its president. Such an interpretation is wrong. The President of the Particular Council has only to deal with the Conferences which depend on this Council. If the President of the Central Council is at the same time the President of the Particular Council, he is, by right of his office, entitled to name the Presidents of the Conferences depending on this Particular Council; but his office does not give him the same prerogative on the Conferences which depend only on the Central Council. According to the common right, those Conferences are left free of choosing, as they like, their own President.

Art. 8.—The Treasury of the Central Council is supplied by special donations made to it, by collections taken up at the general meetings of the circumscription, and by the offerings annually sent

by each Conference, and by each Council to assist in defraying the general expenses.

Art. 9.—When a Conference or a Particular Council is organized within the circumscription, the Central Council inquires into the propriety of proposing its aggregation to the Council-General. This aggregation can never be granted without the advice of the Central Council.

The Council also refers to the Council-General, when, in its opinion, it is expedient to dissolve, or suspend a Conference or Council.

These last articles contain only matters of detail, which explain themselves. It would be superfluous to insist upon, as it would be useless to insert in the Regulations details on the composition of the Board and the duties of the various officers : nor has an essential point—for it follows as a matter of course been mentioned, that the meetings of these Councils, like those of all others, should, as with Conferences, begin and end by prayer. Nor have any recurring dates for the sittings been prescribed, as they depend much upon circumstances; but they should be held, if possible, monthly, in order that, on the one hand, the whole Council may better know what passes within the circumscription; and, on the other, that the various questions which arise may not be left too long undecided. It was chiefly in the hope of inducing the more frequent sitting of Central Councils, that their composition has been modified.

Such is this Rule in its entirety. It approaches closely to that of the Superior Councils, and does not really differ from the latter except in the mode of nomination of the Presidents and the members

who compose it. Applied in France to Councils situated close to the Council-General and outside France to Councils under the direction of Superior Councils, it slightly restricts, in secondary details, their action and authority in order to promote more centres of practical and local life. May these rules tend to the good direction of the Conferences and contribute to the fostering among them of the spirit of charity, simplicity and zeal, which will always be their principal strength. This is the most cherished wish of the Council-General.

INSTRUCTIONS

TO BE FOLLOWED IN FORMING

CONFERENCES OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Deus est qui inhabitare facit
unius moris in domo.

People who have never borne an active part in the meetings of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, frequently form a false idea concerning the difficulties of founding a Conference. To clear away all errors on such a point, it will be well to explain, in a few words, in what our Society principally consists, and to state by what practical means Conferences have been hitherto founded. We shall, perhaps, furnish many with matter for reflecting, and seriously examining whether it be in their power to endow the town they inhabit with such a useful institution.

As it has been often said, the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul are not, necessarily, designed to relieve *a vast number of poor*. Such a result would, doubtless, be a source of happiness to them; but it is neither an obligation, nor a necessary condition of existence. Their chief and fundamental object is the sanctification of the members by the personal performance of acts of charity:

and this may be accomplished as easily by the humblest Conference, as by the most numerous and wealthy one. Whence spring several consequences, which lead us immediately to our subject.

The first is, that those who wish to found a Conference, should not be deterred by the fewness of willing helpers they meet with. The first Conference of Paris, the mother of all the others, was commenced by 7 members ; that of London by 13 ; and that of Caen by 3. All of these are now in a flourishing state, and have given rise to many others. Nor is it necessary that people of high station should lend their influence, to recommend a newly founded Conference to public attention. The humblest beginnings, as daily experience shows, have often proved the best.

The second consequence is, that established Societies should not apprehend a dangerous rivalship from the formation of a Conference. The Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul have often shown the necessity of new Works, and have furthered the foundation of many (1). Up to the present day, *they have caused none to decline, nor diminished the prosperity of any.*

Moreover, in the field of charity, there are al-

1. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which is exclusively composed of men, carefully avoids those Works which concern the other sex, and leaves them entirely to Female Societies. But, in order that there may be no gap left in the organization of charity, it has often contributed, by its wishes and exhortations, to found Ladies Associations for the patronage of orphan and apprentice girls, etc., etc.

ways unfortunately too many ears to be gathered by the latest gleaners ; and, without injuring either charitable boards, or the works of charitable ladies, or those of venerable Sisterhoods, or parochial Works, everywhere some poor families,—say ten or twenty—may be adopted, and thus will be furnished sufficient exercise for the zeal of the members of the Conference.

Thirdly, it is by no means necessary to be provided with fixed resources. A society that announces itself with pomp, and that declares its intention to relieve a whole class of poor must necessarily find means for insuring certain and adequate revenues, in order to expect success. But when an association is so small in number as a Conference may with impunity be, it may live, as it were, on its daily bread, following the advice of Tobias : *It thou have much, give abundantly ; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little.*

Thus, objections that for a long time did, and still do prevent the establishment of Conferences, are done away with by a simple observation. If the first and fundamental object of the Society had been well known, many towns would have had their Conference of St. Vincent de Paul long since, and the Catholic youth and the poor would be now enjoying the benefits of the institution.

Let us now enter upon the details of organization, and see if it be possible to make them thoroughly understood.

We have already said that a Conference need not be numerous, particularly at its outset ; but it

is essential that all the members composing it should be animated with the spirit of the Society; for which, it is not only requisite that each member should act up to all the precepts of the Catholic Religion, be a sincere and practical Catholic, but also that he should have carefully studied the customs, traditions, and habits of our Conferences. If, then, any one, who wishes to undertake the establishment of one of our charitable colonies, has no practical knowledge of our way of proceeding, his first care should be, to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the publications in which the Society has endeavoured to express its spirit, and describe its way of proceeding. He should study, first, the General Rule, and especially its preamble, which is almost entirely taken from the writings of St. Vincent de Paul; then he should also read the Circulars of the Presidents General of the Society, where the solution of the most usual and practical difficulties is given; and lastly, the General Reports, where examples are brought to illustrate and confirm the precepts. Without such study, it is to be feared that a person would fall into the very difficulties which the first brothers found it no easy thing to get out of; and it is also to be feared, that under the name of Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, societies would be formed resembling them but in name, and unable to meet the conditions attached to the Indulgences.

Such preliminary study will not be a long task for a sincere Christian. As soon as it is accomplished, he must look round him for persons likely

to assist him in founding a Conference; and when he thinks he has found them, he should explain briefly to them the organization of the Society, submit the Rule to them, and ask them if they be willing to enter into the spirit of it, and to adopt its principles. But he must, on no account, apply to any but sincere Christians—Catholics who do not blush at performing all the duties commanded by the Church. Sad experience has proved that it was fatal to swerve from this rule and that to admit persons, however charitable and however animated with religious convictions, but hesitating as to certain precepts of the Church, would be to sow in the bosom of the Conferences a germ of division, perhaps of death.

Let us also add, that, to combine those elements of the Conference, which shall one day give it life and health, some other precautions ought to be observed. Even the sincere performance of the duties of Christianity is not sufficient for the founders of a Conference. They should unite with those duties, enlightened and thorough piety, a spirit of conciliation, peace, and humility, ardent love for the poor and for the Society, and a perseverance undaunted by the difficulties inherent to all beginnings. They must bear in mind, that they are destined to be the elders of the Society, whom the younger brothers will look to for example and traditions; wherefore they should possess such qualities as will be edifying, at all times and in all places. Such members are fortunately more easily found than is generally supposed; and are so far from being found in only a

certain class or station of life, that experience has fully proved, that the closest intimacy, and most heartfelt affection, reign in those Conferences, where the ages, position, and education of the members vary most. We shall not, of course, cite either any individual or Conference; but we can affirm that, to our knowledge, in all the Conferences of Paris, the mixture of elements most opposite, in a worldly sense, but united in the spirit of charity, has been attempted, practiced, and continued, with pleasure and success.

It may, it is true, sometimes be found that timid and circumspect people will be afraid to make an engagement that binds them down, and is liable to disturb their ordinary course of business. All such objections cannot be overruled: but one means should not be left untried, since it has often succeeded in such cases—it is to offer to admit them to the Conference on trial. If they have any zeal in them, the hindrances and difficulties they apprehend will soon vanish; their desire to return to their poor and to the meetings of the brothers will triumph over difficulties, and their worldly occupations will be made to square with the duties of charity; thus, the Conference will have acquired the co-operation of valuable members who will contribute to its present and future welfare.

Thus it is, that desirable members are found in the different ranks of society, and in different political parties, uniting in the desire of relieving the poor of our Blessed Lord, and of advancing on the road to Christian perfection.

A last step is necessary before establishing a Conference, and that is, to obtain the sanction and protection of the local ecclesiastical authority. It must, indeed, always be borne in mind, that, though the majority of our brothers are laymen, and the duties of priesthood do not allow many of its members to join in our Works, we are, and intend to remain, obedient Christians, and respectful sons of the Church.

Some Conferences, particularly those in foreign part, are wont to ask the ecclesiastical authority to appoint a priest to be their Spiritual Director. Such a combination, which is found in all the Conferences in England and Ireland, merits attention. At the same time that it preserves the lay character of the Society, it strengthens the tie that unites it to the Church and, in all questions relating to the moral and religious state of the poor, it ensures the authority of a prudent and devoted guide.

In some places, our brothers have been so fortunate as to get the Venerable Bishop of their diocese, or the parish priests, to accept the title of honorary president. All these customs, though differing in form, come to the same in the end ; for they all witness to our unanimous desire to rally under our legitimate pastors, and the ministers of the Church.

As soon as such sanction is obtained, the most important thing is to meet immediately, and to set to work.

At this particular point of progress, some Conferences have lost much precious time in discus-

sing Rules and Regulations. They thought that local considerations required some departure from certain customs enumerated in the General Rule ; and that, before entering on works of charity, it was necessary to fix their landmarks. We cannot too earnestly entreat those, who are about to organize a Conference, not to act thus. Indeed, it may now be said that our Rule, submitted, as it was, for the approbation of His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI, and, so to speak, consecrated by more than sixty years application in various countries where manners, laws and customs were wholly different, recommends itself with the most indisputable authority to the confidence of the Conferences. Besides, it was not at the outset of our work that it was written : following the example of St. Vincent de Paul, our guide as well as our patron, who only gave its constitutions to the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission a considerable time after it was established, our founders also waited many years before embodying in written rules the *simple usages which*—as is said by the preliminary article upon the Rule—*had for a lengthened period been followed and loved.* Therefore, when one or another of us take part in the establishment of a Conference, instead of engaging in discussion, let us engage systematically in the practice of Rules the wisdom of which is now everywhere recognized, and accordingly as we apply them we will observe the disappearance of objections and difficulties which at the very outset had suggested themselves to our minds.

The first care of our new brothers will be the

composition of the Board. The regulations which govern its nomination are laid down in the General Rule; and they will do well to conform to them, if it be only to appoint provisional officers.

It frequently happens that, during the first few days, the brothers do not know one another well enough to be able to proceed to the permanent election of a president and other officers. On which point, their line of conduct must be determined by circumstances; for, in one case, the immediate and final appointment of a President will secure the prosperity of a Conference for ever; whilst, in another case, it may be prudent to wait for the arrival of new brothers, who can give more time and weight to the Society. Moreover, whenever the election does take place, we cannot too earnestly engage our brothers to meditate on the instructions contained in the circular of March 1st, 1844, where the qualities which make a good president are pointed out: gentleness of temper; a sincere and ardent affection for the Conference, its members, and its poor; an equal dislike for rash novelties, and for the spirit of routine; he should, if possible, be in independent circumstances, that he may be able to devote all his energy to the common work; and lastly, but above all, he should be endued with an active mind, wisdom, and prudence.

After the installation of the officers, the day and place of meeting should be immediately fixed. A Conference that meets in a public building, in some of the church premises, in the presbytery—if

it be possible—in a school, in an office at the Town Hall, more easily attracts adhesions and to some extent borrows from the place of its meetings some of the credit associated with the place itself. On the contrary, it is a great disadvantage to a Conference to be indebted for its place of meeting to the precarious good will of a person, who is not a member; and, moreover, the having to go to the house of a person with whom, however respectable, one is unacquainted; the little susceptibilities which, unfortunately, exist in some localities, will frequently be made a pretext, or given as a reason, for not joining the Society; and thus, the Conference may languish for want of a proper place of meeting. Our brothers should, then, hasten to find a proper meeting-room; but it must be understood, that the search should not last long enough to endanger the regularity of the meetings.

These preliminaries will generally be settled at the first meeting; but whether they are or not, it is highly important that the brothers should not separate, for the first time, without having put their hand to the plough, without having adopted somes families, without having fixed upon the tradesmen who are to supply the provisions to be given to the poor, and without having agreed, at least provisionally, on the extent and nature of the relief to be given. Thus, entering immediately into practical existence, the members will be bound to the Conference; not one of them, if he has any charity in his heart, will fail to be present at the next meeting, if in the interval he

has visited a sick, or an infirm fellow creature. Differences of opinions about charity, about the way of relieving, and about theories, will give way before questions of practice, and a constantly increasing energy will spring up.

It will perhaps have been remarked, that in earnestly recommending our future brothers to hasten to adopt some work of charity, we mentioned the visitation of the poor at their homes. We did so designedly. It is a work that becomes our Society more than any other. We have too often had occasion to notice that the patronage of apprentices occupies but few members unless the visitation of the poor be joined to it. The Work of Saint Francis Regis calls for the exertion of still fewer members; and two or three are enough to establish rent saving banks. Orphanages require too much capital at the outset; and although it is to be hoped that such works will eventually be founded, they cannot be immediately realized, on account of the long preparatory study they require. Visiting the poor may, on the contrary, be set about without delay: all that is necessary is to ask the parish priest, the Sisters of Charity, or benevolent people, for the names of a few poor families, who may be visited immediately, their wants inquired into, and relief given. It is, therefore, expedient that this precious work should be organized without loss of time; a work that may be done by all, that requires neither too much time, nor much learning, nor much personal exertion, and which may justly be called the daily bread of charity.

A very important point to be settled without delay is the regular weekly recurrence of the meetings. If Conferences meet but at long intervals, it will be found much more difficult to impart to the members that uniformity of feeling and views with which alone a Conference can prosper; zeal will consequently flag; for no work is carried out, cheerfully and regularly, that does not frequently engage us. Another still more important point is to open and close the meetings with the usual prayers, and to establish the custom of making a collection, conducted with inviolable secrecy. Indeed, without prayer, we should run the risk of forgetting that we meet in the name of Jesus Christ, and that we can have no merit that does not spring from Him; without absolute secrecy in making the collection, or with the principle of *fixed contribution for members,* we should deprive ourselves of one of the most precious merits of alms-giving, that of joining humility with sacrifice.

When all these preparatory measures are completed, the Conference is founded, and must rely on the grace of God, on the zeal of the brothers, and on time, for future extension. It may then notify its existence to the Council General, and solicit its aggregation, which will extend to it the spiritual favours granted so liberally to the Society by Gregory XVI, of venerable memory. The petition should be made without any set formality, in the simple and homely way that characterizes our dealings and correspondence; it will suffice to make known to the Council General the

following points, entering, of course, into all details likely to interest or edify it (1) :

1. The date of the foundation of the Conference ;
2. Tho list of the officers, with their professions or occupations, and their addresses ;
3. The names of the other members of the Conference ;
4. The days, time, and place of meeting ;
5. The works chosen ;
6. Relations with the clergy ;
7. The adoption of the General Rule ; and, if not, the modifications should be stated.

In order to facilitate the regular transmission of such documents, but by no means from a vain liking for formalism, a form of petition for aggregation has been printed, and is sent to the Conferences that are being formed. This form not only procures valuable information for the central Society, instead of leaving useful hints scattered throughout a voluminous correspondence ; but it has the far greater merit of calling to mind details to which little importance is attached at the mo-

1. The letter should be adressed to the President General or to the Secretary General of the Society, 6, rue Furstenberg, Paris. In case the new Conference is established in a country where there is a Superior or Central Council of the Society, the application should be transmitted by such Council and it should be accompanied by its recommendation.

The Council General expresses the wish that correspondents should, as far as possible, refrain from inscribing on the covers of their letters the titles President General or Secretary General, when the names of those officials are known : it is contrary to humility to give such titles.

ment, but which, later, one might frequently regret not having at hand.

At length when the aggregation has been pronounced and the Conference duly incorporated into our family of charity, it must then hasten to reap the advantages of such a communion of prayer, works, and thoughts. The General Reports, the Circulars, Reports of the General Meetings, those of other Conferences, and the more frequent periodical appearance of the *Bulletin*, will quickly unite the new Conference to this vast organization of charity; but nothing will be found so efficacious as frequent correspondence with the Council General, with the Superior and Central Councils and communication by word or letter with neighbouring Conferences. It is thus, by a mutual communication of thoughts and deeds, and by an interchange of visits, that the first fervour of zeal is kept up, whilst progress is being made in experience and wisdom.

Such are the means that have been employed, up to the present moment, for founding Conferences. This simple notice will, we hope, justify the observation we set out with, and show how easy it is to extend and multiply the branches of our dear Society. May it contribute to multiply them, to the edification of Catholic youth and to the relief of the poor! May it, by drawing the attention of all the Conferences to old established rules, contribute to maintain that unity which is the offspring of fraternity; and may it verify the motto: *Deus est qui inhabitare facit unius moris in domo.*

PRAYERS

AT THE OPENING OF THE SITTING.

In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Veni, Sancte Spiritus; Reple tuorum corda fidelium, et tui amoris in eis ignem accende.

Come, O Holy Ghost; fill the hearts of thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of thy love.

℣. Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur;

℣. Send forth thy Spirit and our hearts shall be regenerated.

℟. Et renovabis faciem terræ.

℟. And thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Oremus.

Let us pray.

Deus, qui corda fidelium Sancti Spiritus illustratione docuisti, da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere, et de ejus semper consolatione gaudere, per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

O God, who through the light of the Holy Ghost, didst instruct the hearts of thy faithful, grant that by the same Spirit we may be truly wise, and ever enjoy his consolation, through our Lord Jesus-Christ. Amen.

Ave, Maria.

Hail Mary.

℣. Cor Jesu sacratissimum,

℣. Sacred heart of Jesus,

℟. Miserere nobis.

℟. Have mercy on us.

℣. Queen conceived without original sin,
℟. Pray for us.
℣. Saint Vincent de Paul,
℟. Pray for us.

℣. Regina sine labe concepta,
℟. Ora pro nobis.
℣. Sancte Vincenti a Paulo,
℟. Ora pro nobis.

THE CLOSING PRAYERS.

In the name, etc.
℣. Saint Vincent de Paul,
℟. Pray for us.

In nomine Patris, etc.
℣. Sancte Vincenti a Paulo,
℟. Ora pro nobis.

Let us pray.

Most gracious Jesus, who didst raise up blessed Vincent for an apostle of thy most ardent charity in the Church, pour forth upon thy servants that same fervour of charity, that, for the love of Thee, they may with a most ready heart bestow their goods upon the poor, and spend themselves for their souls. Who with God the Father livest and reignest in the unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end.
℟. Amen.

Oremus.

Clementissime Jesu, qui beatum Vincentium flagrantissimæ charitatis tuæ apostolum in Ecclesia suscitasti, effunde super famulos tuos eumdem charitatis ardorem, ut amore tuo libentissime in pauperes impendant sua, et seipsos super impendant; qui cum Deo Patre vivis et regnas in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia sæcula sæculorum.
℟. Amen.

FOR BENEFACTORS.

Benefactoribus pauperum gratiam largiri dignare, piissime Jesu, qui impertituris misericordiam in nomine tuo centuplum regnumque cœleste promisisti.

℟. Amen.

Sub tuum præsidium confugimus, sancta Dei Genitrix; nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus; sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.

℟. Amen.

Et fidelium animæ per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace.

℟. Amen.

In nomine Patris, etc.

Vouchsafe, we beseech thee, thy grace to the benefactors of the poor, most tender Jesus, who hast promised a hundred fold and a heavenly kingdom to those that do works of mercy in thy name.

℟. Amen.

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God: despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers. O ever glorious and blessed Virgin.

℟. Amen.

And may the souls of the faithful through the mercy of God rest in peace. ℟. Amen.

In the name, etc.

A PRAYER USED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

According to the terms of the Brief of Our Holy Father Pope Pius IX of the 13th September 1859, an Indulgence of 300 days is granted to the members and benefactors of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, each time they recite this prayer.

We thank Thee, O Lord, for the many and great blessings which Thou hast been hitherto pleased to heap upon the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Gratias agimus tibi, Domine, qui Societatem sancti Vincentii a Paulo tot ac tantis hactenus benedictionibus cumulare dignatus es.

We beg of Thee to continue still graciously to look down upon this Society, which is so dear to us, upon its several branches, and in particular upon that branch to which we belong. Grant that it may be everywhere extended, strengthened and perpetuated, the spirit of mercy, of simplicity, and brotherly union continuing, as from the beginning, to animate it, so that its undertakings, being fully divested of all earthly interest and worldly desires, may become daily more fruitful for Heaven.

Hanc igitur nobis dilectissimam Societatem precamur usque respicias, sed et singulas illius partes et eam imprimis cui adscribimur. Fac, quæsumus, ut propagetur ubique et in perpetuum confirmetur, vigente semper eodem, qui fuit ab initio, pietatis, simplicitatis et fraternæ dilectionis affectu ita ut illius opera, ab omni prorsus terrestri fœnore et cupiditate libera, magis ac magis in Cœlum fecundentur.

Thou knowest, O Lord! the spiritual and temporal necessities of the poor families we endeavour to assist; thou knowest likewise our own; have mercy on us, O Lord, and let all expe-

Scis ipse, Domine quam multis indigeant tum spiritualibus, tum temporalibus bonis familia pauperum, quibus pro parte, exigua nimis, opitulamur. Scis et quam multis ipsi indigeamus.

Miserere nostri, Domine, et infinitam misericordiam tuam omnes pariter sentiamus.

Nostris quoque fratribus qui eodem nobis conjunguntur sodalitio, si qui variis nunc premuntur angustiis, subveni, piissime Deus. Infunde illis fortitudem, prudentiam, pacem et fiduciam quæ a te sunt. Nostræ et illorum ærumnæ, patienter pro Christo toleratæ, tibi sint acceptæ et in salutem fructificent.

Fusis tandem precibus te, Domine, per merita Domini nostri Jesu-Christi, specialemque beatæ Mariæ et santi Vincentii intercessionem deprecamur, ut solutis nostræ mortalitatis vinculis, omnes nobis propinquitate seu necessitudine devinctos, pauperes nobis commissos, carissimosque sodales, regni tui nobiscum facias esse participes. Amen.

rience the effets of thy infinite mercy.

Help also, O most merciful God, any of our brethren of this Society, who may now be suffering sundry trials. Grant them that fortitude, prudence, peace and confidence, which proceed from Thee. May their sorrows and our own, patiently endured for Christ's sake, be agreeable to Thee and be fruitful for us unto salvation.

Lastly, O Lord! we beseech Thee, through the merits of our Lord Jesus-Christ, and the special intercession of the Blessed and Immaculate Mary, and of our holy patron St. Vincent, to unite us one day in Thy kingdom to our friends and kinsfolk, to the poor entrusted to our care, and to our brethren of this Society. Amen.

PRAYERS TO IMPLORE THE ASSISTANCE OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Veni, creator Spiritus,
Mentes tuorum visita,
Imple superna gratia
Quæ tu creasti pectora.

Qui diceris Paraclitus,
Altissimi donum Dei,
Fons vivus, ignis, charitas,
Et spiritalis unctio.

Tu septiformis munere,
Digitus paternæ dexteræ,
Tu rite promissum Patris,
Sermone ditans guttura.

Accende lumen sensibus,
Infunde amorem cordibus,
Infirma nostri corporis
Virtute firmans perpeti.

Hostem repellas longius,
Pacemque dones protinus;
Ductore sic te prævio,
Vitemus omne noxium.

Per te sciamus da Patrem,
Noscamus atque Filium;
Te utriusque Spiritum
Credamus omni tempore.

Deo Patri sit gloria
Ejusque soli Filio
Cum Spiritu Paraclito
Nunc et per omne sæculum.
Amen.

℣. Emitte spiritum tuum et creabuntur.
℟. Et renovabis faciem terræ.
Oremus. — Deus, qui corda fidelium Sancti Spiritûs illustratione docuisti, da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere, et de ejus semper consolatione gaudere. Per Christum Dominum nostrum.
℟. Amen.

DE PROFUNDIS.

De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine; Domine, exaudi vocem meam.

Fiant aures tuæ intendentes in vocem deprecationis meæ.

Si iniquitates observaveris, Domine; Domine, quis sustinebit?

Quia apud te propitiatio est, et propter legem tuam sustinui te, Domine.

Sustinuit anima mea

in verbo ejus; speravit anima mea in Domino.

A custodia matutina usque ad noctem, speret Israel in Domino.

Quia apud Dominum misericordia, et copiosa apud eum redemptio;

Et ipse redimet Israel ex omnibus iniquitatibus ejus.

℣. Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine; ℟. Et lux perpetua luceat eis.

℣. Requiescant in pace.

℟. Amen.

℣. Domine, exaudi orationem meam; ℟. Et clamor meus ad te veniat.

℣. Dominus vobiscum; ℟. Et cum spiritu tuo.

Oremus.

Fidelium, Deus, omnium Conditor et Redemptor, animabus famulorum famularumque tuorum remissionem cunctorum tribue peccatorum, ut indulgentiam, quam semper optaverunt, piis supplicationibus consequantur, qui vivis et regnas in sæcula sæculorum. ℟. Amen.

℣. Requiescant in pace.

℟. Amen.

THE LITANIES

OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us. Christ graciously hear us.
God the Father, of Heaven, have mercy on us.
God the Son, redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity one God, have mercy on us.
Holy Mary, pray for us.
St. Vincent de Paul, pray for us.
St. Vincent de Paul, endowed from your earliest youth with the wisdom of old age,
St. Vincent de Paul, full of mercy from your infancy,
St. Vincent de Paul,—Chosen like David from being a simple shepherd to become chief and Pastor of the people of God,
St. Vincent de Paul, free in slavery and chains,
St. Vincent de Paul the just, living by faith,
St. Vincent de Paul, ever tranquil and secure on the firm anchor of Christian hope,
St. Vincent de Paul, ever burning with the fire of charity,
St. Vincent de Paul, truly simple, upright, fearing God,
St. Vincent de Paul, meek and humble of heart, true disciple of Jesus Christ,

Pray for us.

St. Vincent de Paul, perfectly mortified in the spirit and the flesh,
St. Vincent de Paul, ever animated by the spirit of Christ,
St. Vincent de Paul, truly zealous for the glory of God,
St. Vincent de Paul, ever burning within, and transported without, with zeal for the conversion of souls,
St. Vincent de Paul, declared and implacable enemy of the world and its maxims,
St. Vincent de Paul, who found in Christian poverty the precious pearl and rich treasure of the Gospel,
St. Vincent de Paul, angel of purity,
St. Vincent de Paul, man of obedience, ever conquering in your words,
St. Vincent de Paul, devoted from youth to the labours of charity,
St. Vincent de Paul, ever careful to shun even the appearance of evil,
St. Vincent de Paul, ever aspiring to the most perfect virtues,
St. Vincent de Paul, immovable as a rock in the stormy sea of the world,
St. Vincent de Paul, constant as the sun in the paths of true wisdom,
St. Vincent de Paul, most patient in the midst of adversity,
St. Vincent de Paul, meek and forbearing,
St. Vincent de Paul, devoted child of the Roman Church,
St. Vincent de Paul, inviolably attached unto death to the chair of Peter,
St. Vincent de Paul, ever averse to the new doctrines and profane innovations of error,

Pray for us.
Pray for us.
Pray for us.

St. Vincent de Paul, destined by Providence to evangelize the poor,
St. Vincent de Paul, tender father and perfect model of the clergy,
St. Vincent de Paul, wise founder of the Congregation of the Mission,
St. Vincent de Paul, prudent institutor of the Sisters of Charity,
St. Vincent de Paul, full of tenderness and generosity towards the poor,
St Vincent de Paul, unwearied in prayer and in the ministry of the Word.
St. Vincent de Paul, perfect imitator of the life and virtutes of Christ.
St. Vincent de Paul, faithful unto the end, in avoiding evil and doing good,
St. Vincent de Paul, whose death like his life was precious before the Lord,
St. Vincent de Paul, who, in the knowledge of the first truth, in the love of the sovereign goodness, in the paths of the blessed eternity, enjoyeth perfect bliss.

Pray for us.

Pray for us.

Ask for all Christians and especially for your dear children that walking faithfully in your footsteps, they may reach the same end and participate in the same bliss.
Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord.
Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, O Lord.
V. The Lord has led the just man through the ways of equity.
R. And he has shown unto him the kingdom of God.

LET US PRAY.

Great God! Who, through thy infinite bounty, hath in our days, in the charity and apostolic humility of thy blessed servant Vincent de Paul, renewed the spirith of thy well-beloved Son, in order to preach the Gospel to the poor, to console the afflicted, to to assuage the miserable and to add a new lustre to the ecclesiastical order; grant us, we beseech Thee, by his powerful intercession, that delivered from the greatest misery of the world, which is sin, we may make it our chief study to please Thee by the practice of the same charity and humility. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

BRIEF

OF HIS HOLINESS GREGORY XVI

TO THE

COUNCIL-GENERAL OF THE BROTHERHOOD
OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

GREGORY XVI. PP.

The be held in perpetual remembrance.

It is meet that the Roman Pontiff should especially enrich with the heavenly stores of the Church those pious societies of men who earnestly and diligently employ themselves in the performance of the works of Christian charity. We have, therefore, deemed it our duty willingly to yield assent to the pious entreaties of the President and members of the General Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, first instituted at Paris, who have earnes-

GREGORIUS PP. XVI.

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam.

Romanum decet Pontificem cœlestibus Ecclesiæ thesauris eas præsertim pias hominum Societates ditare, quæ in christianæ charitatis operibus obeundis omni cura, studioque versantur. Itaque cum Præses et Consultores generales Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo, Parisiis primum institutæ, enixis precibus a Nobis flagitaverint, ut nonnullas indulgentias tum plenarias tum partiales ipsi Societati concedere velimus, Nos libenti animo piis eorum

precibus adnuendum censuimus.

Quapropter omnibus et singulis ad Consilium generale Societatis ejusdem, nunc Parisiis institutum, pertinentibus, vel addictis Consiliis particularibus Parisiorum et aliarum civitatum vere pœnitentibus et confessis, ac sacra communione refectis, dummodo omnibus, vel tribus ex quatuor Consilii cœtibus in mense habitis interfuerint, plenariam peccatorum suorum Indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus.

Item omnibus ipsius Societatis sociis, ut dicunt, activis, necnon consultoribus, et aliis, de quibus habita mentio est, qui commemoratam Indulgentiam ibi jam fuerint assecuti, dummodo omnibus, vel tribus ex quatuor conventibus, seu Conferentiis in mense habitis interfuerint, ac vere pœnitentes, et confessi, ac sacra communione refecti, dictum Consilium generale, nunc Parisiis institutum, pertinentes, vel addictis Consiliis particularibus Parisiorum et aliarum civitatum vere pœnitentibus et confessis, ac sacra communione refectis, dummodo omnibus, vel tribus ex quatuor Consilii cœtibus in mense habitis interfuerint, plenariam peccatorum suorum Indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus.

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tly besought us to grant to this Society some indulgences, both plenary and partial.

Wherefore, we mercifully grant in the Lord's name, a Plenary Indulgence and remission of their sins, to all and every one belonging to the General Council of the said Society now instituted at Paris or attached to the particular councils of Paris and of other cities, who being truly penitent, having confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, shall have been present at all the meetings of the Council held during the month, or at three out of the four.

Also to all (as they are termed), active members of the said Society; and also to members of the Councils and others, of whom mention hath been made, and who may have obtained the aforesaid Indulgence; we likewise grant a Plenary Indulgence, on condition of their being truly penitent, confessing

their sins, receiving the Holy Communion, and being present at all or three out of four of the Conferences or meetings held during the month.

Moreover, we in like manner grant a Plenary Indulgenee, to be obtained by all hereafter admitted into the said Society, on the day on which they shall, being truly penitent, having confessed their sins, and received the Holy Communion, be received into any active degree, whether of aspirant member, of ordinary member of any particular Conucil, or of member of the General Council.

Moreover, we farther grant a Plenary Indulgence to all, both active and honorary members of the said Society who, on the Festivals of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of St. Vincent de Paul, and on the second Sunday after Easter (which is the anniversary of the translation of the relics of St. Vincent), also, on

fessi, sanctissimum Eucharistiæ sacramentum sumpserint, plenariam similiter Indulgentiam largimur.

Præterea eamdem pariter plenariam Indulgentiam tribuimus ab omnibus in prædictam Societatem cooptandis acquirendam quo die vere pariter pœnitentes, et confessi, ac S. communione refecti ab eadem Societate in diversis gradibus activis Membri aspirantis, Membri ordinarii, et Consultoris generalis recepti fuerint.

Insuper omnibus Sociis tum activis, tum honorariis commemoratæ Societatis, qui diebus festis Immaculatæ Conceptionis B. Mariæ Virginis, et S. Vincentii a Paulo, et Dominica secunda post Pascha, quæ est anniversaria dies translationis reliquiarum ejusdem S. Vincentii, æque ac feria secunda post Dominicam primam Quadragesimæ,

vere pœnitentes et confessi sacram synaxim exceperint in Missa quæ prædictis diebus pro Societate celebratur, atque cœtui generali, qui his temporibus habetur, interfuerint, plenariam pariter Indulgentiam impertimur.

Atque etiam Sociis omnibus et Societatis benefactoribus in mortis articulo constitutis, si vere pœnitentes et confessi, vel quatenus id facere nequiverint, saltem contriti nomen Jesu ore si potuerint, sin minus corde devote invocaverint, et mortem tanquam peccati stipendium de manu Domini, patienti atque alacri animo susceperint, plenariam similiter Indulgentiam concedimus.

Ad hæc Sociis omnibus activis ejusdem Societatis, quotiescumque, corde saltem contrito, aliquam conferentiam, aliquam pauperem fami-

the Monday after the First Sunday in Lent, being truly penitent, and having confessed their sins, shall receive the Holy Communion at the Mass which on the aforesaid days is celebrated for the Society, and shall have been present at the general meeting which is held on those occasions.

And also we in like manner grant a Plenary Indulgence to all members and benefactors of this Society, at the hour of death, who, being truly penitent, and confessing their sins, or, should circumstances prevent their doing this, being ad least contrite, shall with their lips, or if unable so to do shall in their hearts, devoutly invoke the Holy Name of Jesus, and shall with a patient and ready mind accept death from the hand of the Lord as a penalty for sin.

We moreover in the customary form of the Church remit in favour of all active members of the said Society, seven years and as many as

forty days of the penances enjoined to them, or in any otherwise due by them; as often as they, with at least a contrite heart, shall visit any Conference or poor family, or the schools or workshops of the poor, or shall perform any other good work in accordance with the object of the said Society. Which partial Indulgence every individual active member of the said Society can obtain as often as with a contrite heart he shall assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, when celebrated for the soul of any member, and as often as he shall follow the bodies of the poor to ecclesiastical interment.

We further allow all or any of these indulgences, remissions of sins, and relaxations of penances, to be applied by way of suffrage to the souls of Christ's faithful who have departed this life in charity with God.

And finally by the saliam, aut scholas, officinasque pauperum visitarint, vel quodcumque aliud bonum opus juxta mentem dictæ Societatis præstiterint, septem annos, ac totidem quadragenas de injunctis eis, seu alias quomodolibet debitis pœnitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus. Quam quidem partialem Indulgentiam singuli Socii activi memoratæ Societatis lucrari poterunt, quotiescumque corde contrito sacro Missæ sacrificio pro anima alicujus Socii celebrando adstiterint, et quoties corpora pauperum ad Ecclesiasticam sepulturam fuerint prosecuti.

Quas omnes, et singulas Indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones, ac pœnitentiarum relaxationes etiam animabus Christi fidelium, quæ Deo in charitate conjunctæ ab hac vita migraverint, per modum suffragii applicari posse indulgemus.

Denique omnibus aliis

sive Consiliis, sive Conferentiis ejusdem Societatis, quæ approbante Consilio generali instituuntur, sive ab eodem, sive a Consiliis particularibus civitatum, aut provinciarum ab ipso jam institutis, item Sociis, qui degunt in locis, in quibus nondum viget Conferentia, omnes et singulas commemoratas Indulgentias, si in locis eisdem præstiterint veluti poterunt consueta opera, aliasque præscriptas conditiones impleverint, eadem Auctoritate Nostra Apostolica concedimus, atque elargimur.

me our Apostolical Authority we grant and extend all and every of the above-mentioned Indulgences to all other, whether Councils or Conferences, of the same Society established with the approbation of the Council-General, whether by itself or by the particular Councils of towns or provinces already established by it. Also to members who live in places where as yet no Conference exists, provided that in these places they shall perform as far as they can the customary works, and fulfil the other prescribed conditions.

Non obstantibus Nostra, et Cancellariæ Apostolicæ Regula de non concedendis Indulgentiis ad instar, aliisque Constitutionibus et Ordinationibus Apostolicis, cæterisque contrariis quibuscumque.

Notwithstanding our own and our Apostolic Chancery's Rule concerning not granting Indulgences *Ad Instar*, and other Apostolic Constitutions and ordinances and any other things whatsoever to the contrary.

Volumus autem, ut præsentium Litterarum transumptis, seu exemplis etiam impressis manu personæ in Ecclesiastica

It is our pleasure also that copies of these present letters, whether manuscrit or printed, having the sign manual of

the properly constituted ecclesiastical authorities, shall possess the same authority, and have the same respect paid to them as if these present themselves were exhibited or shown.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, under the Fisherman's ring, the tenth day of January, 1845, the fourteenth year of our Pontificate.

A. Card. Lambruschini.

✠

Place of the Seal.

dignitate constitutæ sub scriptis, eadem prorsus fides adhibeatur, quæ adhiberetur, ipsis præsentibus, si forent exhibitæ, vel ostensæ.

Datum Romæ apud sanctum Petrum sub annulo Piscatoris, die x Januarii MDCCCXLV, Pontificatus Nostri anno decimo quarto.

A. Card. Lambruschini.

✠

Locus Sigilli.

SUPPLEMENTARY BRIEF

GREGORY XVI. POPE

To be held in perpetual remembrance.

Whereas we have learned that the Society established under the auspices and name of St. Vincent de Paul, and devoted to the exercise of works of Christian charity, is in an eminent degree advancing the good of religion and the welfare of the faithful,

GREGORIUS PP. XVI.

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam.

Quum Societatem sub auspiciis et nomine S. Vincentii a Paulo institutam Christianæ charitatis operibus exercendis intentam, Religionis bono, et fidelium commoditati præclare noverimus inservire, ut ea nova in dies incrementa suscipiat, de celestibus

Ecclesiæ thesauris eos omnes ditandos censuimus, qui ad juvandam Societatem ipsam curas suas, opesque contulerint, ut hoc illorum studium spiritualibus propositis gratis magis, magisque exardescat.

and in order that the said Society may daily make new progress, we have determined to enrich with the Heavenly Treasures of the Church all such as shall bestow their care and wealth to the furtherance of the Society aforesaid, to the end that by the spiritual advantages held out to them their zeal may be more and more enkindled.

Itaque omnibus et singulis Christi fidelibus utriusque sexus, qui Eleemosynam fixam, et constantem ad Consilium generale transmittent, vere pœnitentibus, et confessis, et sacra communione refectis plenariam peccatorum suorum indulgentiam, et remissionem semel in mense misericorditer in Domino elargimur.

Wherefore we mercifully grant in the Lord's name a Plenary Indulgence and remission of sins for once each month to all and every one of the faithful, whether men or women, who shall give to the General Council a fixed and regular amount of alms, provided they be truly penitent, confess their sins, and receive the Holy Communion.

Præterea omnibus utriusque sexus Christi fidelibus, qui hujusmodi fixam, et constantem Eleemosynam transmittent ad Consilia particularia, provinciarum, sive ur-

Moreover, we grant an Indulgence of seven years and as many forty days once each month to all the Faithful, whether men or women, who shall give a like fixed and re-

gular amount to the Particular Councils of Provinces or Towns, established by the Council - General.

And further, we grant an Indulgence of one year, obtainable likewise once each month by such of the faithful, men or women, who shall by handwriting or otherwise engage to pay into Conferences approved by the Council-General, or by Particular Councils empowered to approve by the Council-General, any fixed and regular contribution.

Lastly, we bestow on all and every one of the Faithful, whether men or women, an Indulgence of seven years and as many forty days, obtainable once each month on the days when they solicit and collect contributions in aid of the Councils, wheter General or Particular.

All this, notwisthstanding our own and the Apostolic Chancery's Rule concerning not granting Indulgences *Ad Instar*,

bium a Consilio generali instituta , indulgentiam septem annorum, et totidem quadragenas semel in mense concedimus.

Insuper utriusque sexus Christi fidelibus, qui seu per Chirographum, seu alio quocumque modo spondeant, se aliquam Eleemosynam fixam, et constantem collaturos Conferentiis adprobatis, vel a Consilio generali, vel a Consiliis particularibus, ad hoc delegatis, indulgentiam unius anni semel pariter in mense lucrandam elargimur.

Denique omnibus, et singulis Christi fidelibus utriusque sexus, indulgentiam septem annorum, et totidem quadragenarum semel in mense lucrandam impertimur iis scilicet diebus, quibus pro Consiliis, generali, vel particularibus stipem emendicando collegerint.

Non obstantibus Nostra, et Cancellariæ Apostolicæ Regula de non concedendis indulgentiis *ad instar*, aliisque Constitutionibus, et Ordinatiobus Aposto-

licis cæterisque contrariis quibuscumque.

and other Apostolic Constitutions and Ordinances, or any other things whatsoever to the contrary.

Volumus autem, ut præsentium Litterarum transumptis, manu personæ in Ecclesiastica dignitate constitutæ subscriptis eadem prorsus fides adhibeatur, quæ adhiberetur ipsis præsentibus si forent exhibitæ vel ostensæ.

It is our pleasure also that copies of these present letters, whether manuscript or printed, having the sign manual of the properly constituted ecclesiastical authorities, shall possess the same authority and have the same respect paid to them as if the original were exhibited or shown.

Datum Romæ apud S. Mariam Majorem, sub annulo Piscatoris, die XII Augusti MDCCCXLV, Pontificatus Nostri anno decimo quinto.

Given at Rome at St. Mary Major's, under the Fisherman's Ring, the 12th day of August, 1845, the fifteenth year of our Pontificate.

A. Card. LAMBRUSCHINI,
Ep. Sabinus.

✠

Locus Sigilli.

A. Card. LAMBRUSCHINI,
Bishop of Sabina.

✠

Place of the Seal.

BRIEF

OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS PIE IX TO THE COUNCIL-GENERAL OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

PIUS PP. IX.

For perpetual remembrance.

The members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul having made known to us that the Apostolic See had formerly granted a Plenary Indulgence on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and on that of St. Vincent de Paul, but on condition of being gained at the Mass celebrated on both these days for the Society itself, have presented us with a humble petition, begging that we would give greater extent to this first favour of the Apostolic See. Desirous then to accede to these pious desires for the spiritual good of the faithful, in virtue of our Apostolic power, and confiding in the mercy of Almighty God, and by the autho-

PIUS PP. IX.

Ad perpetuam rei memor.

Exponendum nobis curarunt sodales Societatis a S. Vincentio a Paulo nuncupatæ, ipsis jam alias ab hac Apostolica Sede Plenariam Indulgentiam diebus festis Conceptionis B. Mariæ Virginis Immaculatæ ac ejusdem santi Vincentii Paulani fuisse concessam, non aliter tamen nisi intra missæ actionem quæ hisce diebus pro ipsa Societate celebrari solet lucrifaciendam. Quamobren a nobis humiliter petierunt, ut hanc Sedis Apostolicæ concessionem extendere quodammodo dignaremur. Nos igitur piis hisce precibus quæ in spirituale Christifidelium bonum cedunt benigne annuere volentes, Auctoritate Apostolica, deque Omnipotentis Dei miseri-

cordia ac BB. Petri et Pauli Apostolorum ejus auctoritate confisi, omnibus et singulis præfatæ Societatis sodalibus, ut Plenariam Indulgentiam festivate Conceptionis B. Mariæ Virginis Immaculatæ lucrifaciendam, vel ipsa festivitate, vel sicubi transfertur die quo ibidem celebratur ; Plenariam Indulgentiam vero die festo S. Vincentii Paulani concessam eodem die, ac septem continuis diebus immediate sequentibus, una tantum vice hujus octidui spatio ad unius cujusque sodalis libitum eligenda, lucrari possint ac valeant ; dummodo injuncta omnia ad eas consequendas rite adimpleant, tenore præsentium concedimus et impertimur ; in contrarium facientibus non obstantibus quibuscumque. Volumus autem ut præfatæ indulgentiæ Parisiis tantum intra Missarum solemnia quæ ante Sacras Corporis Vincentii a Paulo reliquias, etsi non pro Societate celebrentur, lucro esse possint utque prae-

rity of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, we give and grant by these present to all and each one of the members of the said Society, provided they faithfully fulfil the conditions prescribed elsewhere to this effect — to gain the Plenary Indulgence annexed to the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the B. V. Mary, either on the day of the feast itself, or on the day to which the festival happens to be transferred. And as to the plenary Indulgence granted for the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, we grant that it may be gained either on the day itself or on any day within the seven following days ; that is to say, once within the eight days. But it is our pleasure, that in Paris the aforesaid Indulgences can be gained only at the Masses which are celebrated in presence of the Relics of St. Vincent de Paul, and this even if these Masses be not offered for the Society. And it is our plea-

sure, that the manuscript or printed copies of these present letters signed by a public notary, and furnished with the seal of a person of ecclesiastical dignity, shall obtain the same faith and the same effect as the originals themselves, if they were produced and shown.

These are to stand good for all times.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's under the Seal of of the Fisherman, the 18th of March, 1853, the seventh year of our Pontificate.

For His Eminence
The Cal L. Lambruschini,

J.-B. Brancaleoni
Castellani, Substitute.

sentium Litterarum transumptis seu exemplis etiam impressis manu alicujus Notarii publici subscriptis, et sigillo Personæ in Ecclesiastica dignitate constitutæ munitis eadem prorsus habeatur fides, quæ ipsis haberetur præsentibus, si exhibitæ ostensæve forent.

Præsentibus perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris.

Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum, sub annulo Piscatori, die XVIII Martii MDCCCLIII, Pontificatus Nostri anno septimo.

Pro Dno
Card. Lambruschini,

J.-B. Brancaleoni
Castellani, subst.

BRIEF OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS IX

GRANTING INDULGENCES TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, WHO ATTEND SPIRITUAL EXERCICES.

PIUS PP. IX.

For perpetual remembrance.

Whereas our well-beloved sons, the President-

PIUS PP. IX.

Ad perpetuam rei memor.

Exponendum nobis curarunt dilecti Filii, præses

generalis et consiliarii Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo, Lutetiæ Parisiorum institutæ, ejusdem Societatis sodales spiritualibus exercitiis gregatim quotannis vacare pie consuevisse. Qui quidem mos ut longe lateque propagetur, ac in uberiorem Christifidelium fructum cedat, humiles nobis preces admorunt ut hanc sodalium pietatem cœlestium Ecclesiæ munerum, quorum dispensatores Nos voluit Altissimus, elargitione juvaremus. Nos itaque salubrem frugiferamque hujusmodi consuetudinem in Domino commendantes, utque magis in dies magisque invaleat ex animo optantes, piis hisce votis annuendum censemus. Quamobrem auctoritate nobis a Domino tradita, deque omnipotentis Dei misericordia ac BB. Petri et Pauli Apostolorum ejus auctoritate confisi, omnibus et singuli præfatæ Societatis sodalibus, qui spiritualibus hujusmodi exercitiis, sic ut præfertur haberi solitis singulis diebus de-

General and the Members of the Council-General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, established in Paris, have thought it advisable to represent to us that the members of that Society were in the pious habit of coming together every year for the purpose of attending in a body to spiritual exercises, and have addressed to us a humble prayer to promote this custom, by bestowing upon the piety of the Brotherhood the heavenly gifts of the Church, of which it has pleased the Most High to make us the dispensers, in order that custom may spread far and wide, and yield to the faithful most abundant fruits; and whereas we on our own part highly commend this salutary and profitable custom, and that it should grow daily more and more into use, we have deemed it fit and advisable to comply with the pious request. Wherefore by the authority entrusted to us by Our Lord, and

relying upon the mercy of the Almighty God, and by the authority of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, we grant a Plenary Indulgence and remission of sins to all the members in general, and every one of them in particular of the Society aforesaid, who shall have devoutly attended the whole course of spiritual exercises, such as they have been represented to us, and who, being truly penitent, shall have confessed their sins and received the Communion at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on the last day of these exercises, and moreover have addressed fervent prayers to God for peace and concord among Christian princes, for the rooting out of heresies and the exaltation of the Holy Mother Church. To those again who, with a truly contrite heart have attended only a part of the above exercises, and have said the prayers above indicated, we remit one hundred day's penance,

vote interfuerint, vereque pœnitentes et confessi in postremo horum dierum Missæ sacrificio sacra sese communione refecerint, ac pro christianorum principum concordia, hæresum extirpatione, ac S. Matris Ecclesiæ exaltatione pias ad Deum preces effuderint, plenariam omnium peccatorum suorum indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus. Qui vero corde saltem contriti eorumdem spiritualium exercitiorum partem tantum absolverint, ac ut supra oraverint, centum dies de injunctis eis seu alias quomodolibet debitis pœnitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus. Quas omnes et singulas Indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones ac pœnitentiarum relaxationes, etiam animabus. Christifidelium quæ Deo in charitate conjunctæ ab hac luce migraverint, per modum suffragii applicari posse indulgemus. In contrarium facientibus, non obstantibus quibuscumque præsentibus

perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris.

either laid upon them by the Church in the usual way, or in other way whatsoever incurred. We concede, also, that all and every one of the above Indulgences, remissions of sins, and abatements of penances, be likewise made applicable, by way of suffrage, to the souls of the faithful who have departed this life in peace with God. These presents to be available for all the time to come, anything whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum sub annulo Piscatoris, die XVIII Martii MDCCCLIV, Pontificatus Nostri anno octavo.

Given at Rome, under the Fisherman's Seal, the 18th day of March, 1854, the eighth year of Our Pontificate.

Pro Dno
Card. LAMBRUSCHINI,

J.-B. BRANCALEONI,
Cancell., subs. (L. S.).

For H. E.
Cardinal LAMBRUSCHINI,

J.-B. BRANCALEONI,
substitute.

BRIEF OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS IX

GRANTING AN EXTENSION OF INDULGENCES TO THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

By attaching fresh indulgences to the recitation of certain prayers either by the members of the Society or by the poor families whom they visit.

PIUS IX. POPE.

For the perpetual remembrance of the thing.

The General Council of the pious Society which takes its name from St. Vincent de Paul, and meets in Paris, has informed us that by Letters Apostolic of the month of January, A. D. 1845, a Plenary Indulgence was granted on the usual conditions to each and every member of the said Society every year on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and on the first Monday in Lent.

Also that by virtue of the same letters, the aforesaid faithful were allowed to gain a similar Plenary Indulgence on

PIUS PP. IX.

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam.

Renuntiandum curavit Nobis Summum Consilium quod Parisiis constitit, piæ Societatis cui a S. Vincentio a Paulo nomen factum, Apostolicis Litteris Januario mense Anno MDCCCLXV datis, omnibus et singulis e dicta Societate Christifidelibus plenariam indulgentiam quotannis festiva die Immaculatæ Conceptionis Deiparæ Virginis Mariæ, et feria secunda, quæ prima occurrat in quadragesima, sub assuetis conditionibus lucrifaciendam fuisse concessam : deinde earumdem litterarum vi veniam factam ut suprascripti fideles plenariam pariter consequi cum Domino

possent, si statis Sodalitii festis, cæteris pietatis operibus rite absolutis, sacro adstarent quod jussu Sodalitii ejusdem celebraretur.

Jam vero, cum ab eodem Consilio relatum modo sit Nobis, magis e re Sodalium fore, si prima atque altera ex plenariis indulgentiis, quas memoravimus, in alium diem traducantur postremæ vero adjecta opera audiendi Sacrum aliqua ex parte immutetur, supplicatumque prætere ut novis ad Salutem æternam præsidiis tam universum Sodalitium, quam fideles suæ curæ creditos munire de Apostolica Nostra Auctoritate dignaremur, Nos, qui ea præsertim fidelium Sodalitia cordi habemus, quæ dum egenos præsenti ope juvant, eorum animos ad virtutem comparant, informant, piis hujusmodi Votis annuendum ultro censuimus. Quamobrem de Omnipotentis Dei misericordia, ac BB. Petri et Pauli Ap. ejus auctoritate con-

certain feasts of the Society, by complying with the usual conditions, and by moreover hearing a Mass whose celebration had been procured by the Society.

Now, however, that we have learned from the said Council that it would better suit the members of the Society if the first and second Plenary Indulgences which we have mentioned were transferred to another day, and if the condition of hearing Mass, appended to the last-mentioned Plenary Indulgence, were somewhat modified.

And that the same Council has moreover petitioned us for new assistance towards gaining eternal salvation for the whole Society, and for the faithful, we, who have at heart, in a special manner, such societies of the faithful as relieve the temporal necessities of the poor, and at the same time instruct their minds and incline them to virtue, have willingly resolved to comply with their pious wishes

Wherefore, relying on the mercy of Almighty God, and by the authority of His Holy Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, we extend to the Sunday immediately following the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary the Plenary Indulgence which the members of the said Society could heretofore gain on the feast itself, provided that the said feast does not fall on Sunday, or is not transferred in any district to another Sunday. So that the members of the aforesaid Society shall be able to gain, at their option, a Plenary Indulgence, either on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, or on the Sunday immediately following. In like manner, by virtue of the present letters, we transfer the Plenary Indulgence granted on the aforaised Monday to the Sunday immediately preceding, all other conditions remaining the same.

Besides, lest a dearth of priests should anyfisi, plenariam quidem indulgentiam quam dicti Sodales festivitate Immaculatæ Conceptionis Beatæ Mariæ Virginis lucrari possunt, dummodo idem festum in Dominicam non cadat, vel aliculi in aliam Dominicam amandetur, ad Dominicum proxime subsequentem extendimus, sic ut prædicti Sodales plenariam indulgentiam vel in festo Immaculatæ Conceptionis, vel in Dominica proxime subsequenti lucrari pro suo libito valeant: item plenariam indulgentiam memorata feria secunda eisdem concessam in Dominicam immediate antecedentem, cæteris omnibus servatis, tenore præsentium transferimus. Præterea, ne quo in loco Sacerdotum penuria impedimento sit, per presentes impertimus, ut iidem Sodales, quamquam Missæ Sacrificio simul congregati adstiterint, quod minime jubente Sodalitio celebratur, tamen, si reliqua omnia rite præstiterint, plenariam æque cum Domino consequan-

tur. Deinde de ejusdem Auctoritatis Apostolicæ plenitudine omnibus et singulis utriusque sexus Christifidelibus, quibus eadem Societas a sancto Vincentio a Paulo nuncupata ope et opera suppetias fert, vere pœnitentibus, et Confessis, ac S. Communione refectis, qui quam libet Ecclesiam seu Oratorium publicum festivitatis D. N. J.-C. Die festo S. Josephi, B. M. V. Sponsi a primis Vesperis: die vero, quo spiritualis, quem vocant, recessus quotannis absolvitur, ab ortu usque ad occasum solis dierum hujusmodi devote visitaverint, ibique pro Christianorum principum concordia, hæresum extirpatione, ac Sanctæ Matris Ecclesiæ exaltatione pias ad Deum preces effuderint, quo die præfatorum id egerint, plenariam omnium peccatorum suorum indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus. Denique omnibus et singulis Christifidelibus pio huic Sodalitio quocumque tandem

where stand in the way, we permit, by these present letters, that if the members of the same Society assemble and hear Mass together, even though the celebration of the Mass shall not have been procured by the Society, they may nevertheless gain a Plenary Indulgence in the Lord by fulfilling all the other conditions.

Moreover, to each and every member of the faithful of either sex, who are relieved by the aid and exertion of the said Society of St. Vincent de Paul, we from the plenitude of the same Apostolic power mercifully grant in the Lord a Plenary Indulgence and remission of all their sins, on the feast of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and on the day which terminates the yearly Retreat; provided that, truly penitent, they shall have confessed their sins and receive Holy Communion, and shall likewise devoutly visit some church or

public oratory, and pour forth pious prayers to God for peace among Christian princes, the extirpation of heresies, and the exaltation of our Holy Mother Church, such visit to be made on the feast of St. Joseph from the first vespers, and on the concluding day of the yearly Retreat between the rising and setting of the sun. In fine, for each and every member the faithful connected in any way with this pious Society or benefactors to the same, we relax, in the usual form of the Church, three hundred days of penance, whether enjoined or otherwise due, as often as they shall, with a contrite heart, recite in any language the peculiar prayer of the Society, which begins, "We give thee thanks," etc.

And for every one relieved by the said Society, we relax one hundred days of penance as often as, with a contrite heart, alone or with their families, they shall recite in any language, the

nomine addictis, vel benefactoribus, quoties corde saltem contriti propriam Sodalitii precationem, cujus exordium : « Gratias agimus tibi, Deus qui Societatem S. Vincentii a Paulo, etc. » quovis idiomate recitaverint, tercentum dies ;

Universis vero quibus dicta Societas opitulatur, si corde saltem contrito, aut soli, aut cum suis, Orationem Dominicam et Salutationem Angelicam, adjecta quocumque pariter idiomate invocatione

hujusmodi : « Regina sine labe originali concepta, ora pro nobis. Sancte Vincenti a Paulo, ora pro nobis, » — recitaverint, qua vice id egerint, centum dies de injunctis, seu alias quomodolibet debitis pœnitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus. Quas omnes et singulas indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones, ac pœnitentiarum relaxationes etiam animabus Christifidelium, quæ Deo in charitate conjunctæ ab hac luce migraverint, per modum suffragii applicari posse elargimur. In contrarium facient, non obstant, quibuscumque præsentibus perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris.

Lord's Prayer and Angelical Salutation, adding " Queen, conceived without original sin, pray for us. St. Vincent de Paul pray for us. " We permit all these indulgences to be applied by way of suffrage to the souls of those faithful who departed the life in the friendship of God. The present letters are to have effect permanently for the future, notwithstanding any contrary regulation.

Volumus autem ut præsentium Litterarum transumptis seu exemplis etiam impressis, manu alicujus Notarii publici Subscriptis, et Sigillo Personæ in Ecclesiastica dignitate constitutæ munitis eadem prorsus fides adhibeatur, quæ adhiberetur ipsis præsentibus, si forent exhibitæ vel ostensæ.

We desire that all copies of the present letters, whether in print or manuscript, which shall be signed by some public notary and furnished with the seal of some ecclesiastical dignitary, shall be credited as these present letters themselves.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, September 13th, 1859, in the fourteenth year of our Pontificate.

For H. E. Card. Macchi,

J. B. Brancaleoni Castellani, *deputy.*

Datum Romæ apud S. Petrum, sub annulo Piscatoris, die xiii Septembris mdccclix, Pontificatus Nostri anno decimo quarto.

Pro Duo Card. Macchi,

J. B. Brancaleoni Castellani, *subst.*

BRIEF OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS IX

GRANTING INDULGENCES TO THE FATHERS AND MOTHERS OF MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

PIUS IX. POPE.

For the perpetual remembrance of the thing.

An humble petition has been presented to us in the name of our dear son, Ad. Baudon, President-General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, praying that we would deign, by our Apostolic favour, to extend to the parents of the members of the said Society, all the indulgences, plenary as well as partial, and the other spiritual favours, hither-

PIUS PP. IX.

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam.

Supplices nobis admotæ sunt preces nomine dilecti filii Ad. Baudon, hodierni Præsulis Generalis Societatis Sancti Vincentii de Paulo nuncupatæ, ut quæ indulgentiæ tum plenariæ, tum partiales aliæque spirituales gratiæ ab hac Sancta Sede Apostolica eidem Societati concessæ adhuc fuerunt, easdem omnes et singulas propinquis quoque sodalium

præfatæ Societatis communicare de benignitate Apostolica dignaremur. Nos ad augendam fidelium religionem et animarum salutem cœlestibus Ecclesiæ thesauris pia charitate intenti piis hujusmodi votis, quantum cum Domino possumus obsecundare volentes, genitoribus tantum memoratorum sodalium nonnullas ex iis indulgentiis dictæ Societati jam concessis quas ipsi lucrari possunt impertiri decrevimus. Igitur de Omnipotentis Dei misericordia ac BB. Petri et Pauli, Ap. ejus auctoritate confisi, omnibus et singulis sodalium Societatis S. Vincenti de Paulo nunc et pro tempore existentium genitoribus tantum in cujuslibet eorum mortis articulo, si vere pœnitentes et confessi ac S. Communione refecti vel, quatenus id facere nequiverint, saltem contriti nomen Jesu, ore si potuerint, sin minus corde devote invocaverint, plenariam, iisdemque qui singulis diebus spiritualibus

to granted to the Society by the Holy Apostolic See. We, urged by a gracious desire to augment the religion of the faithful and to aid to the salvation of souls by means of the heavenly treasures of the Church, and wishing, with our Lord's help, to accede, as far as we can, to such pious desires, have resolved to grant, but only to the fathers and mothers of the members mentioned above, several of the indulgences already granted to the said Society, and which the members themselves may gain. Wherefore, by the mercy of the all-powerful God, and resting on the authority of the Blessed Peter and Paul, His Apostles, we mercifully grant, in our Lord, a plenary indulgence to all fathers and mothers of the present and future members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and to each of them, but only to said fathers and mothers at the moment of death, who, being truly contrite,

shall have confessed and received holy Communion, or when they cannot do this, at least, shall have contritely invoked the name of Jesus with the tongue, when that is possible, or in their hearts, if they can do no more; and, besides, we likewise grant a plenary indulgence, and the remission of all their sins, to the same persons, who, each day, shall have assisted devoutly at the spiritual exercices practised by the said Society, and who, on the last day of those exercises, being truly contrite, and having confessed and communicated, shall have assisted at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and offered up pious prayers for concord between Christian princes, the extirpation of heresy, and the exaltation of our holy Mother the Church.

Moreover, to the faithful herein mentioned, who shall have piously assisted, on any day whatever, at the same spiri-

exercitiis a dicta sodalitate habendis devote interfuerint, ac postremo eorumdem die, vere pœnitentes et Confessi ac S. Communione refecti sacro sancto Missæ sacrificio adstiterint, ac pro Christianorum principum concordia, hæresum extirpatione, peccatorum conversione, ac S. Matris Ecclesiæ exaltatione pias ad Deum preces effuderint, plenariam similiter omnium peccatorum suorum indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus.

Insuper præfatis fidelibus supra memoratis, qui, quolibet die spiritualibus iisdem exercitiis rite adstiterint, centum dies

et quoties sacro in suffragium alicujus defuncti sodalis celebrando interfuerint aut pauperum corpora ad sepulturam associaverint, aut quodcumque aliud pietatis vel charitatis opus eidem Societati consentaneum exercuerint, septem annos totidemque quadragenas de injunctis eis, seu alias quomodo libet debitis pœnitentiis in forma Ecclesiæ consueta relaxamus. Quas omnes et singulas indulgentias, peccatorum remissiones ac pœnitentiarum relaxationes etiam animabus Christifidelium quæ Deo in charitate conjunctæ ab hac luce migraverint per modum suffragii applicari posse impertimus.

tual exercises, we remit, in the accustomed form of the Church, a hundred days of the penances which shall have been imposed on them, or which they shall have otherwise incurred in any way; and seven years and seven quarantines, as often as they shall have assisted at a religious office, celebrated for the soul of any deceased member of the said Society, or accompanied to their burial mortal remains of the poor, or performed any other pious and charitable work in conformity with those practised by the said Society. We also grant that all and each of those indulgences, remissions of sins, and relaxations of penalties may be applied, by may of suffrage, to the souls of the faithful, who have departed this life in the love of our Lord.

In contrarium facientibus, nonobstantibus quibuscumque præsentibus, perpetuis futuris temporibus valituris. Volumus

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, the present brief shall avail in perpetuity. It is our will that there shall

be accorded to the written or printed copies of these presents, which shall be certified by the signature of a public notary and attested by the seal of a person constituted in ecclesiastical dignity, the same faith which should be granted to these same presents, if they were exhibited or produced.

Given at Rome. at St. Peter's, under the seal of the fisherman, September 5, 1873, the 28th of our Pontificate.

For H. E. Card. Asquini,
F. Profili, *Deputy.*

The translation is conformable to the Latin text.

D. Lucciardi,
Secretary to the Apostolic Nunciature.

Paris, 6 December, 1873.

autem ut præsentium litterarum transumptis seu exemplis etiam impressis manu alicujus notarii publici subscriptis et sigillo personæ in ecclesiatisca dignitate constitutæ munitis eadem prorsus fides adhibeatur, quæ adhiberetur ipsis præsentibus si forent exhibitæ vel ostensæ.

Datum Romæ, apud S. Petrum, sub annulo Piscatoris, die V. Septembris 1873, Pontificatus Nostri anno vigesimo octavo.

Pro D. Card. Asquino.
F. Profili, *Substitutus.*

Concordat cum originali.

D. Lucciardi,
Secretarius Nunciaturæ Apostolicæ.

Parisiis, die 6 Decembris 1873.

PETITION OF THE COUNCIL-GENERAL

AND RESCRIPT OF OUR HOLY FATHER, POPE LEO XIII

Containing some modifications of the former Briefs granting Indulgences to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the extension of some of these Indulgences.

Beatissime Pater — Ad pedes Sanctitatis Vestræ humiliter provoluti Præses generalis Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo enixe deprecantur, ut nonnulla pia opera pro lucrandis Indulgentiis a Sodalibus dictæ Societatis injuncta tantisper immutare et aliquas Indulgentias determinatis personis jam concessas, ad alias benigne extendere dignetur.

Humiliter enim exponunt:

1°. Ex Brevibus, 1 Januarii 1845, 18 Martii 1853 et 13 Septembris 1859, atque ex Rescripto S. Congregationis Indulgentiarum 17 Julii 1886, Indulgentias plenarias pro quatuor principalibus festis ejusdem Societatis concessas, variis condi-

Most Holy Father — Humbly prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, the President-General and the members of the Council-General of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, earnestly entreat you to deign to modify some of the works of piety prescribed for the Members of the said Society to gain Indulgences, and to extend to others the Indulgences already granted to certain persons.

For that purpose, they humbly lay before you:

1. That according to the Briefs of the 1st January, 1845, the 18th March, 1853, and the 13th September, 1859, and according to the rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences of the 17th July, 1886, the Plenary Indulgences granted for

the four principal feasts of this Society are subject to various conditions, which very many of the Members either do not correctly understand, or are unable to fulfil on the day fixed, so that they are frequently in danger of not gaining the Indulgences in question.

2. That it appears from the Brief of the 5th of September, 1873, that certain Indulgences were granted to the fathers and mothers of Members, but not to their wives, who nevertheless contribute no less zealously to the welfare of the Society.

After having maturely weighed these considerations, the President and the Members of the Council-General of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul humbly implore Your Holiness :

1. That the Plenary Indulgences already granted for the four principal feasts of the Society may be gained either on the aforesaid days, or on one of the seven days immediately following them,

tionibus esse subjectas, quas plerique sodales non recte intelligunt, aut easdem die fixo adimplere nequeunt, ita ut sæpe sæpius in periculo versentur non lucrandi præfatas Indulgentias.

2°. Ex Brevi 5 Septembris 1873, nonnullas Indulgentias eruitur esse concessas genitoribus Sodalium Societatis, non vero uxoribus, quæ tamen non minori zelo in bonum Societatis operam suam impendunt.

His mature perpensis Præses et Consultores generales Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo S. V. humiliter exorant quatenus :

1°. Plenariam Indulgentiam in quatuor diebus, festis principalibus jam concessas, lucrari valeant vel dictis diebus, vel uno ex septem continuis immediate eas sequentibus, firma manente facultate

ex Brevi diei 18 Martii 1853, lucrandi Indulgentiam plenariam pro die festo Immaculatæ Conceptionis B. V. Mariæ concessam, die etiam translatæ solemnitatis ;

the privilege remaining in force according to the terms of the Brief of the 18th March, 1853, of gaining the Plenary Indulgence granted for the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the B. V. Mary, also on the day to which the solemnity is transferred ;

2°. Præfati Sodales, ad sacram synaxim accedere valeant in missa cui una simul ipsi intersunt sive in eadem ecclesia, vel capella, sive in pluribus particulari Concilio uniuscujusque civitatis ad hoc designatis ;

2. That Members may approach the Holy Table at the Mass they assist at in common, either in the same church or chapel, or in several churches or chapels assigned for this intention by the Particular Council of each town ;

3°. Pariter memorati sodales Cœtui generali, cui interesse tenentur ad lucrandas Indulgentiam, eidem assistere valeant vel pridie diei festi tempore vespertino, vel ipso die festo, vel uno ex septem continuis illam immediate sequentibus ;

3. That Members may hold the General Meeting which they are obliged to attend to gain the Indulgences, either on the eve of the feast from the afternoon, or on the feast itself, or on one of the seven days immediately following it ;

4°. Tandem sodales, qui gravi morbo laborantes, vel infirma valetudine detenti impediantur quominus missam in communi audiant, vel Cœtui

4. That Members who, on account of serious illness, or habitual infirmity, are prevented from hearing the Mass in common, or attending the

General Meeting, may gain the Indulgences granted to the Members, by performing some other work of piety enjoined upon each by his confessor, and which they will be able to perform in proportion to their strength, in place of the conditions they were bound to fulfil in order to gain the Indulgences;

5. That the Indulgences granted by the Brief of the 5th September, 1873, be extended to the wives of the Members under the same conditions.

generali intersint lucrari possint Indulgentias concessas sodalibus adimplendo injuncta eisdem a cujuslibet eorum confessario alia pia opera, quæ ipsi pro viribus præstare poterunt loco earum conditionum, quæ pro acquirendis præfatis Indulgentiis præstare tenebantur;

5°. Indulgentiæ ex Brevi, 5 Septembris 1873, concessæ extendantur ad Sodalium uxores sub iisdem conditionibus.

In the audience of His Holiness of the 30th January, 1888.

Our Most Holy Father Pope Leo XIII, has deigned to accede to the request on every point. These presents will be available for all time to come without any issuing of Brief, notwithstanding anything to the contrary. Given at Rome, at the Secretary's Office of the Sacred Congregation of In-

Ex Audientia Sanctissimi diei 30 Januarii, 1888.

Sanctissimus Dnus Nr Leo Papa XIII, benigne annuit pro gratia in omnibus juxta preces. Præsenti *in perpetuum* valituro absque ulla Brevis expeditione. Contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus. Datum Romæ ex Secretaria S. Congregationis Indulgentiis sacrisque Reliquis præpo-

sitæ die 30 Januarii 1888.

✠ Cajetanus,
Card. Aloisi Masella,
præf.

✠ A., Episcopus Oensis,
Secretarius.

dulgences and Holy Relics, 30th January, 1888.

✠ Cajétan,
Card. Aloisi Masella,
Prefect.

✠ A., Bishop of Oca,
Secretary.

Visum et recognitum Parisiis, die 11 Martii 1888.

M. d'Hulst,
Vic. Gen.

Revised and approved, Paris, 11th March, 1888.

M. d'Hulst,
Vicar-General.

RESCRIPT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIII

GRANRING INDULGENCES TO THE PATRONAGES OF CONNECTION WITH THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

Beatissime Pater,

Ad pedes sanctitatis vestræ humiliter provoluti, præses generalis et consultores generales societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo sanctitati vestræ exponunt eadem societatem hodiedum non tantum coalescere ex sodalibus, qui pietatis operibus vulgo *Conferences* nuncupatis sedulam navant operam, sed etiam

Most Holy Father,

Humbly prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, the President-General and the Members of the Council-General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul wish to make known to your Holiness that the Society is now recruited, not only by Members zealously devoted to the works of piety, commonly known

as *Conferences*, but also by associates who labour to promote other charitable works, particularly suited to the needs of the present times and generally described under the name of *Patronages*. With regard to the good works practised by the said associates, the following is a list of the principal : — 1, Conducting children to their parish church ; 2, instituting night and Sunday schools; 3, assisting the scholars of the Christian schools by means of special marks of encouragement ; 4, teaching catechism to children who are forced to attend secular schools; 5, placing in safe houses youths apprenticed to learn any trade ; 6, sheltering orphans in institutions so as to give them a religious and moral training. Furthermore, the pious work of the Patronages purposes, whenever its funds so permit, establishing the aforesaid good works in extensive premises for

ex sociis qui alia promovent charitatis opera, quæ temporum circumstantiis apprime respondent et patrociniorum nomine vulgo *Patronages* donantur. Opera vero, quæ a sodalibus prædictis exercentur hæc præcipua adnumerantur, nimirum : 1° adducendi pueros ad ecclesiam parochialem ; 2° instituendi scholas vespertinas dominicales ; 3° fovendi alumnos scholarum christianarum solemnibus incitamentis ; 4° docendi christianam catechesim alumnos, qui laicas scholas adire coguntur ; 5° in tuto collocandi adolescentes, qui tirocinium propriæ artis ineunt ; 6 recipiendi aliquo hospitio pueros parentibus orbatos ut ibi religione ac bonis artibus imbuantur. Immo hoc pium opus Patrociniorum sibi proponit, quotiescumque rerum angustiæ id non prohibent, stabiliendi præfata pia opera in grandibus ædibus, ad quas accedunt pueri, tirones, operarii, adolescentes, et in quibus

etiam cœtus fiunt speciales pro patribus familias. Plures interdum harum ædium mandantur curæ Fratrum Instituti S. Vincentii a Paulo, quorum zelus in evangelizandis operariis jamdiu innotuit.

Quæ cum ita sint, oratores humiliter rogant sanctitatem vestram, ut Rectoribus piorum operum Patrociniorum, decreto Concilii generalis societati S. Vincentii a Paulo unitorum, immo Rectorum cooperatoribus sive activis, sive honorariis, nec non pueris, tironibus, operariis omnibus varias artes exercentibus, qui in album dictorum Patrociniorum erunt inscripti, ad incrementum pietatis nec non zeli in promovendis præfatis piis operibus, indulgentiæ concedantur uti infra :

I. *Indulgentia plena-*

the accommodation of the children, apprentices, workmen, and youths. In these special meetings take place also for the fathers of families. Several of these houses are in charge of the institute of the Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul, whose zeal for the spiritual improvement of the working classes has long been known.

In this condition of things your petitioners humbly pray your Holiness to grant the Directors of the Patronages united by a decree of the Council-General to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, likewise to the co-operators, whether active or honorary, of the Directors, and also to the children, apprentices, and all the workingmen of various crafts who will have their names entered in the books of the said Patronages, in order to increase their zeal and piety in furthering the good works above mentioned, the following indulgences : —

I. *A Plenary Indul-*

gence to the Directors of the Patronages, to their co-operators both Active and Honorary, to the children, apprentices and workingmen of all kinds received into the work of the Patronages on the following days: 1st, the day on which they so give their name to the aforesaid good work, or are received under its protection; 2nd, the feast day, regularly appointed in each diocese by the Ordinary, of the patron saint of the pious work; 3rd, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin; 4th, on the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary; 5th, on the feast of St. Vincent de Paul: provided that on the said days, being truly contrite, and having gone to Confession and Communion, they visit a church or a public oratory, and there offer fervent prayers to Almighty God for the intentions of your Holiness; 6th, *in mortis*

ria Rectoribus pii operis Patrociniorum eorumque cooperatoribus sive activis, sive honorariis, pueris, tironibus operariisque universis sub opere Patrociniorum receptis diebus sequentibus: 1° die, quo ipsi præfato pio operi nomen dederint, vel in ejusdem pii operis tutelam recipientur; 2° die festo titulari pii operis in qualibet diocesi ab Ordinario rite adsignato; 3° die festo Immaculatæ Conceptionis Beatæ Mariæ Virginis; 4° die festo Patrocinii S. Josephi, sponsi ejusdem Beatæ Mariæ Virginis; 5° S. Vincentii a Paulo, dummodo dictis diebus vere pœnitentes, confessi ac sacra communione refecti aliquam ecclesiam, vel publicum oratorium devote visitaverint ibique pias ad Deum preces effuderint ad mentem Sanctitatis Vestræ; 6° in mortis articulo omnibus de quibus supra, nec non eorum consanguineis usque ad primum gradum itemque benefactoribus pii operis

Patrociniorum, si uti supra dispositi, vel saltem contriti sanctissimum Jesu nomen ore, sin minus corde, devote invocaverint; 7° Rectoribus eorumque cooperatoribus quater in anno diebus ab Ordinario semel tantum designandis, si dictis diebus de more dispositi præfata peregerint simulque per anni cursum tribus vicibus quolibet mense cœtibus consilii interfuerint.

II. *Indulgentia Septem annorum totidemque quadragenarum :* 1° omnibus, de quibus in precibus, singulis vicibus quibus interfuerint sacrosancto missæ sacrificio in suffragium Sodalium, id est Rectorum *articulo* to all those above mentioned, to their relations to the first degree, and to the benefactors of the pious work of the Patronages, if, being in the dispositions already indicated, or at least being truly contrite, they devoutly invoke the most holy name of Jesus with their lips, or at least with their heart; 7th, to the Directors and to their fellow-labourers four times in the year, on days to be appointed, once for all, by the Ordinary, if on the said days, being in the necessary dispositions, they comply with the aforesaid conditions, and that also in the course of the year they shall have attended the meetings of the Council three times each month.

II. *An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines :* 1st, to all those mentioned in the petition, every time they assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass said for the associates, that is, the Directors and their

co-operators, for the chlidren, apprentices and all workingmen received into the pious work of the Patronages ; 2nd, every time they accompany the mortal remains of the associates for interment, and recite some prayer ; 3rd, to the Directors, and to their co-operators as well as to all the children, apprentices, workmen of various crafts, received in the Patronages every time they shall attend the usual meetings held during the month, and offer a prayer at the beginning and at the close of the meeting.

Your petitioners implore your Holiness to deign to declare all and each of these indulgences applicable to the souls in purgatory.

Finally, they pray your Holiness that the Patronages founded or to be founded, with the consent of the Ordinaries in the several dioceses, and united to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul by

eorumque cooperatorum, puerorum, tironum, seu operariorum omnium sub pio opere Patrociniorum receptorum celebrando itemque ; 2° singulis vicibus quibus sociorum cadavera ad sepulturam, aliquam precem recitantes, comitati fuerint ; 3° Rectoribus dicti operis et ipsorum cooperatoribus nec non pueris, tironibus, operariis, omnibus varias artes exercentibus in Patrocinium receptis, singulis vicibus, quibus cœtibus in mense habere solitis interfuerint, aliqua eorumdem initio et fine adhibita prece.

Quas omnes et singulas indulgentias oratores Sanctitatem Vestram exorant, ut benigne velit declarare applicabiles animabus igne purgatorii detentis.

Demum preces admovent ad Sanctitatem Vestram, ut pia opera Patrociniorum in singulis diocœsibus de consensu Ordinariorum erecta vel erigenda et ex decreto Consilii generalis Socie-

tati S. Vincentii a Paulo unita eo ipso gaudere valeant indulgentiis a Sanctitate Vestra superius expostulatis.

Et Deus . . . . . .

Sanctissimus Dominus Noster Papa Leo XIII, in audientia habita die 15 Martii, 1890, ab infrascripto Secretario S. Congregationis indulgentiis sacrisque Reliquiis præpositæ benigne annuit pro gratia in omnibus juxta preces. Præsenti *in perpetuum* valituro absque ulla Brevis expeditione. Contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus.

Datum Romæ ex Secretaria ejusdem S. Congregationis die 15 Martii, 1890.

C. Card. Cristofori,
Præfectus,

✠ Alexander,
Archiepiscopus Nicopolitan, Secret.

Visum et recognitum Parisiis, die 18 Junii, 1890.

Caron,
Vic. Generalis.

a decree of the Council General, may thereby enjoy the indulgences solicited of your Holiness.

And that God. . . .

Our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, in the audience held on the 15th March, 1890, granted through the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Relics, all the favours sought. These presents will be available *for ever* without any issue of a Brief, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

Given at Rome, from the Office of the Secretary of the said Congregation, on the 15th March, 1890.

C. Card. Cristofori,
Prefect,

✠ Alexander,
Archbishop of Nicopolis, Secretary.

Revised and approved, Paris 18th June, 1890.

H. Caron,
Vicar-General.

RESCRIPT OF OUR HOLY FATHER, POPE LEO XIII

GRANTING AN INDULGENCE FOR EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETINGS.

In the audience of His Holiness on the 21st May, 1892, given to the Secretary mentioned here below of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and of the Holy Relics, our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., deigned to grant to all those indicated in the Petition an Indulgence of only seven years and seven quarantines to be gained once, on the day they shall attend the General Meetings, either annual or extraordinary, of one or of several dioceses together (which meetings are generally held in addition to those which have already taken place four times a year on the feast days indicated, or on one of the days in the octave of those same feasts), and on which they shall also

Sanctissimus Dominus Noster Leo Papa XIII, in audientia habita die 21 Maii, 1892, ab infrascripto Secretario S. Congregationis Indulgentiis Sacrisque Reliquiis præpositæ omnibus, de quibus in precibus, benigne tantum concessit Indulgentiam septem annorum totidemque quadragenarum semel lucrandum die quo ipsi adstiterint Cœtibus generalibus sive annuis sive extraordinariis unius vel etiam plurium simul Diœcesium, quique, præter illos haberi solent, qui jam quater in anno celebrantur statis diebus festis aut uno die infra eorumdem festorum octiduum, simulque aliquam precem juxta mentem Sanctitatis suæ effuderint.

Præsenti *in perpetuum* valituro absque ulla Brevis expeditione. Contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus.

Datum Romæ ex Secretaria ejusdem S. Congregationis die 21 Maii, 1892.

Card. Serafini,
Præfectus,

✠ Alexander,
Archiep. Nicopolitan,
Secret.

Visum et recognitum Parisiis, die 27 Augusti, 1892.

H. Caron, Vicar. gen.

pray for the intention of His Holiness.

These presents to be available for all time to come without any further Brief, anything whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, at the Secretary's Office of the same Sacred Congregation, 21st May, 1892.

Card. Serafini,
Prefect,

✠ Alexander,
Archbishop of Nicopolis,
Secretary.

Revised and approved, Paris 27th August, 1892.

H. Caron, Vic.-Gen.

DECISION OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF INDULGENCES

Extending during the Octave, the power of gaining the Indulgences granted to the Works of Patronage for the Feasts of the Immaculate Conception, of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Vincent de Paul.

Beatissime Pater,

Præses generalis et consultores generales

Most Holy Father,

Humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holi-

ness, the President-General and the Members of the Council-General of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, of which the meeting-place is in Paris, set forth that by the Rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, bearing date the 15th March, 1890, a Plenary Indulgence was granted to the Directors of the pious Work of the Patronages which this same Society seeks to develop, to their co-operators, either active or honorary, to all the apprentices and workmen admitted into the Work of the Patronages, to be gained on certain days of the year, and notably on two feasts, namely, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, and of St. Vincent de Paul. But in France, when these feasts fall on a week-day, it is almost impossible for workmen especially, and for the other faithful admitted into the pious work of the Patronages, to go to

Societatis S. Vincentii a Paulo Parisiis existentis ad Pedes Sanctitatis Vestræ provoluti exponunt per Rescriptum S. Congregationis Indulgentiarum sub die 15 Martii 1890, concessam fuisse plenariam Indulgentiam Rectoribus Pii Operis Patrociniorum quod eadem Societas promovet, eorumque co-operatoribus sive activis sive honorariis, pueris tironibus operariisque universis sub opere Patrociniorum receptis nonnullis infra annum diebus et præsertim duobus festis nempe Immaculatæ Conceptionis Beatæ Mariæ Virginis et S. Vincentii a Paulo. In Galliis vero, quum hujusmodi dies festi incidant in dies profestos, impossibile fere est, ut operarii præsertim et alii Christi fideles qui sub memorato pio opere Patrociniorum recipiuntur adire valeant Ecclesiam peracturi sacramentalem Confessionem et recepturi sacram Synaxim ad effectum lu-

crandi Indulgentias. Hinc oratores admovent preces Sanctitati Vestræ ut Indulgentia plenaria præfatis festivitatibus adnexa acquiri possit at omnibus quibus est concessa vel in dictis festivitatibus vel in uno ex septem diebus eas immediate sequentibus uniuscujusque arbitrio eligendo, ceteris servatis conditionibus ad acquirendam plenariam Indulgentiam præscriptis.

Church in order to confess and receive Holy Communion, with the intention of gaining the Indulgence. Therefore it is, the petitioners humbly implore Your Holiness, that the Plenary Indulgences granted for the aforesaid feasts may be gained by all those to whom it is granted, either on the same feasts, or on one of the seven days immediately following them, according to the choice of each person, by fulfilling the other conditions prescribed for gaining a Plenary Indulgence.

Quam gratiam,

Vigore specialium facultatum a Sanctissimo Domino nostro Leone Papa XIII, tributarum, S. Congregatio Indulgentiis Sacrisque Reliquiis præposita benigne annuit pro gratia juxta preces. Præsenti *in perpetuum* valituro absque ulla Brevis expeditione, contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus.

Datum Romæ ex Secretaria ejusdem S. Con-

Which favour,

By virtue of the privileges specially conferred by our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics has kindly acceded to the request. These presents to be available for all time without any further Briefs, anything whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, at the Secretary's Office of the

Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics, 11th May, 1892.

Card. SERAFINI,
Prefect.

✠ ALEXANDER,
Archbishop of Nicopolis,
Secretary.

Revised and approved, Paris 27th August, 1892.

H. CARON, Vic.-Gen.

gregationis die 11 Maii, 1892.

Card. SERAFINI,
Præfectus.

✠ ALEXANDER,
Archiep. Nicopolitan,
Secret.

Visum et recognitum Parisiis, die 29 Augusti 1892.

H. CARON, Vicar. Gen.

It will be seen by reading the foregoing Briefs and Rescripts that the Sovereign Pontiffs have graciously conferred on the Council-General the power of making the Conferences participators in the Indulgences conceded, by aggregating these Conferences to the Society.

The Council-General being thus commissioned, it is necessary for the good working of the Society and the maintenance of its spirit, that Conferences which desire, for particular reasons, to obtain any modifications in the conditions of the Briefs and Rescripts, should address themselves to this Council, for the transmission of their request. Thus will be avoided the soliciting of favours already possessed by the Society, as sometimes happens through inadvertance. Moreover, our interests being represented before the Sacred Congregation by the Cardinal Protector of the Society, it is to be desired that such petitions be addressed to him by the Council General, as His Eminence wishes.

INSTRUCTIONS
CONCERNING INDULGENCES

I

ON INDULGENCES IN GENERAL

Faith teaches us that after having obtained in the Sacrament of Penance the remission of our sins committed after Baptism—in so far, at least, as regards eternal punishment—in most cases there still remains due to divine justice a temporal reparation called satisfaction. The necessity of this satisfaction after forgiveness of sin is acknowledged and admitted by all Catholic divines, and the works by which we offer it to God are prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and also submission to the Divine will in all the troubles and afflictions of life. Nevertheless, as these works of atonement may for divers reasons be, and often are, insufficient, the Church, infallible in the knowledge and exercise of her spiritual powers, come to the assistance of her children. Making use of the authority derived from her Divine Founder, she remits wholly or in part, but on

certain conditions carefully determined by herself, the temporal punishment that yet remained to be expiated in this world or the next.

The remission of this temporal punishment due to sins already relieved from the penalty of eternal damnation, and which the Church grants independently of the Sacrament of Penance, is called an *Indulgence*.

Indulgences do not absolve any one from the necessity of confessing his sins, receiving absolution and doing penance; on the contrary, they imply that all these things have been already done, and only make up for the deficiency of any atonement we ourselves can offer, by applying to us the superabundant satisfactions of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.

These infinite satisfactions offered by the Son of God and the Blessed Virgin, as also by divers Saints who during their lifetime have more than atoned for their own sins, form, according to Pope Clement VI, *a real treasure,* which increases every day by the accumulation of new spiritual riches, and of which the Church has been divinely instituted the Supreme and Exclusive dispenser. It is from this treasure the Church draws the Indulgences she daily applies to the Faithful, and which are destined to complete or replace the satisfaction still due from them to Divine Justice.

Indulgences granted by the Church are either *Plenary* or *Partial*. They are *Plenary* when they remit the whole of the punishment due to sin, provided always the blot or guilt of sin has been effaced; *partial* when they only remit a part of the

temporal punishment due to sin, as for instance, an Indulgence of seven years or seven periods of forty days.

By thus granting Indulgences which include a fixed number of days, weeks or years, the Church does not pretend to abridge numerically by so much the pains of purgatory; her meaning is to remit thereby a portion of temporal punishment equal to that which would have been remitted by the same number of days, weeks, or years of Canonical Penance, as formerly enjoined by the *Penitential Canons.*

Indulgences Plenary and Partial may be applied to souls in Purgatory, but only when the Briefs granting them authorize thereto. Still the Church does not and cannot apply them directly to the dead, over whom she no longer possesses any jurisdiction; she grants them to the Faithful still living. These latter fulfil the works imposed, and present the atoning value of the indulgence to God, by way of suffrage for the dead: praying Him to accept it in total or partial remission of the temporal punishment that may yet remain for their expiation.

That these Indulgences are acceptable to God and beneficial to souls in Purgatory is affirmed by all Catholic Divines. But how far and in what degree God applies them to the souls we wish to relieve is a question not to be determined. This application depends for its extent upon the Sovereign Will of God, who has not, as in the indulgences for the living, to ratify, in this case, the sentence of His Church.

II

CONDITIONS REQUISITE FOR GAINING INDULGENCES

The conditions prescribed for gaining indulgences relate both to the dispositions of the Faithful and to the works required.

On the part of the Faithful two dispositions are necessary : to be in a *state of Grace*, and to have the *intention* of gaining the indulgence.

1° That he who is, and perseveres in a state of mortal sin, cannot gain Indulgences, admits of no doubt. Liable to eternal punishment while he remains in that state, he can by no means pretend to remission of the temporal pain due to sins that have neither been confessed nor absolved. The inclination to venial sin does not prevent gaining indulgences, which in this case may be applied to other sins already remitted. Still these indulgences cannot be Plenary, because the temporal punishment due to sin, even venial, cannot be remitted, if the sin itself has not already been remitted ; and this remission cannot take place while we still incline towards the perpetration of sin.

2° The intention requisite for gaining an indulgence may be taken only in the morning, and applied to all good works to be performed in the day, and to which the indulgences are attached.

III

Of the Indulgences granted to the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, to its benefactors, to its poor, and to the fathers and mothers of its members.

Indulgences granted to members of the Society.

I. A Plenary Indulgence may be gained once a month by members of the Council-General and by members of Superior and Central Councils and of the Particular Councils of Paris and of other cities, provided that, being truly contrite and having gone to Confession and received the holy Communion, they shall attend all the meetings of their Council or at least three of the four monthly meetings.

II. A like Indulgence is granted to all the active members, not excepting the above-mentioned members of Councils who may have gained the Indulgence mentioned in the preceding paragraph, provided that, being truly contrite and having gone to Confession and received holy Communion, they shall assist at all the meetings of their Conference, or at three out of four of the monthly meetings.

III. A Plenary Indulgence is granted to all, who being truly contrite and having confessed their sins and received holy Communion, shall be admitted to the various active grades of aspirant member, ordinary member, member of a Particular Council and member of the Council general, on the

days upon which they are admitted to each of these grades.

IV. All the members, active or honorary, may gain a Plenary Indulgence on the day of the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, on the First Sunday of Lent (1), on the Second Sunday after Easter and on the day of the feast of Saint Vincent de Paul, either on the said days or on one of the seven days immediately following them, the power being in force besides, according to the terms of the Brief of the 18th March 1853, of gaining the Plenary Indulgence granted for the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also on the day to which the celebration of the feast is transferred; provided that, having confessed their sins, they receive Holy Communion at the Mass heard by them *in common*, either in the same Church or Chapel or in several Churches or Chapels appointed for that intention by the Particular Council of each town and that they attend the General Meeting which takes place at the same time and which may be held either on the eve of the feast from the afternoon, or on the feast itself, or on one of the seven days immediately following it, without its being necessary that the General Meeting should take place on the same day as that on which the Mass is celebrated (2).

1. By the Brief of the 13th September 1859, the Indulgence of the First Monday of Lent is transferred to the First Sunday of Lent.

2. Rescript of the 30th January 1888 and letter of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences dated 15th July 1888.

V. Members who, being afflicted by serious illness or suffering from infirmities, are prevented from hearing the Mass in Common or attending the General Meeting, may gain the Indulgences granted to Members by performing some other pious work which shall be assigned to each by his Confessor, and which, having regard to their strength, they may substitute for the conditions which they were bound to fulfil in order to gain the Indulgences.

VI. A Plenary Indulgence is granted at the point of death to the members of the Society who, being truly penitent, and having confessed their sins, if possible, and if not being truly contrite, shall devoutly call upon the Name of Jesus, with their lips, if able, and if not able at any rate with their heart, and shall with patience and courage accept death from God's hand, as the punishment of sin.

VII. A Plenary Indulgence is granted on the 8th of March, the feast of Saint John of God, to the members who visit the sick either in the hospitals or in their own homes (1).

VIII. An Indulgence of seven years and seven times forty days is granted to all the active members each time that with at least contrite hearts they assist at a Conference-meeting, visit a poor family, or the schools or work-shops of the poor, or perform any other good work in accordance with the spirit of the Society. They can also gain

1. Rescript of the 13th January 1877, obtained upon the application of the Superior General of the Brothers of Saint John of God (See Bulletin for May 1877, Paris, and same number of the Bulletin published at Dublin p. 133).

this Indulgence each time that they assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass whenever it is celebrated for the repose of the soul of any associate, or accompany the remains of the poor to Christian burial.

All these Indulgences may he gained by associates, living in places where no Conference has as yet been established, provided they perform the usual works of Charity and fulfil the other prescribed conditions.

IX. When the Conferences have Retreats or courses of Spiritual Exercises, a Plenary Indulgence is granted to all the members who assist devoutly at all the exercices, provided being truly penitent and having confessed their sins, they receive the Holy Communion at the Mass on the last day of the Retreat and pray for the concord of Christian princes, the extirpation of heresies, and the exaltation of our Holy Mother the Church. An Indulgence of 100 days is granted to those, who, being truly contrite, follow a part of the Exercises and pray as above.

X. An Indulgence of 300 days is granted to all the members of the Society each time that, with a contrite heart, they recite, in any language, the prayer of the Society : « We thank thee, O lord... »

These Indulgences are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

Indulgences granted to the Benefactors of the Society.

I. A Plenary Indulgence and remission of their sins may be gained once a month by each and every one of the faithful of either sex, who regularly gives a fixed and determined alms to the Council-General, on condition of contrition, confession and Holy Communion.

II. An Indulgence of seven years and seven times forty days may be gained once a month by all the faithful of either sex, who in like manner send a fixed alms to the Particular Councils established by the Council-General in any province or town.

III. An Indulgence of one year may be gained, once a month, by all the faithful of either sex, who by subscription or in any other way undertake to give regularly a fixed alms to the Conferences approved by the Council-General, or by the Particular Councils authorised by it to do so.

IV. An Indulgence of seven years and of seven times forty days may be gained once a month by all the faithful of either sex, on the days upon which they shall have made a Collection for the Council-General or for any Particular Council.

V. An Indulgence of 300 days is granted to the benefactors of the Society every time that, with a contrite heart, they recite the prayer of the Society : « We give Thee thanks, O Lord. »

VI. A Plenary Indulgence at the point of death is also granted to the benefactors of the Society in the same form as to the members.

Indulgences granted to the poor under the care of the Society.

I. The Brief of the 13th September 1859 grants to all the poor of either sex, to whom the Society of St. Vincent de Paul gives assistance, a Plenary Indulgence on Christmay Day, on the Feast of St. Joseph and on the last day of the annual Retreat, provided that, being truly contrite and having confessed their sins and received the Holy Communion, they devoutly visit any Church or public oratory and pray therein for concord among Christian princes, for the extirpation of heresy and the exaltation of our Mother the Church : as to the two festivals, the visit to the Church may be made at any time between first Vespers and the end of the festival : and on the last day of the Retreat the visit must be made between sun-rise and sun-set.

II. A Plenary Indulgence is granted on the 8th of March, the feast of St. John of God, to the sick assisted by the Conferences in the hospitals (1).

III. The Brief of the 13th September 1859 grants an Indulgence of 100 days to all whom the Society relieves provided that, with a contrite heart, they recite alone, or with their family, the *Our Father* and *Hail Mary,* adding, in any language, the following invocation : « *Queen conceived without sin, pray for us ; St. Vincent de Paul, pray for us.* »

(These Indulgences are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.)

1. Rescript of the 13th January 1877 (See p. 187).

Indulgences granted to the fathers, mothers and wives of members of the Society. (Brief of the 5th Sept. 1873 and Rescript of the 30th Jan. 1888.)

I. A Plenary Indulgence is granted at the hour of death to all and every one of the fathers and mothers and wives of members of the Society, who, being truly penitent, having confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, or, if unable to do so, at least with true contrition, invoke, with the lips if they can do so, and at least with their heart, if unable to do more, the Holy name of Jesus.

II. A Plenary Indulgence and remission of all their sins to the same, provided they attend every day at the Society's Retreat, and on the concluding day, being truly penitent, and having confessed their sins and received the Holy Communion, assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and pray devoutly for concord among Christian Princes, the extirpation of heresies, and the exaltation of our Holy Mother the Church.

III. An indulgence of 100 days to the same, provided on any day they assist with devotion at the before mentioned spiritual Exercises.

IV. An Indulgence of seven years and seven times forty days is also granted to the same persons, as often as they assist at any religious office celebrated for the soul of any deceased member of the Society, or accompany the mortal remains of the poor to Christian burial, or do any other pious

or charitable work in accordance with the practice of the Society.

All these Indulgences are applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

REVISED AND APPROVED :

H. PELGÉ, Vicar-General.

Paris, 11th August, 1888.

Indulgences granted to the managing Committees of the patronages united (1) *to our Society and to the others members of those works.* (Rescript of the 15th March 1890) (2).

I

The directors of the Patronages and their coöperators, whether active or honorary, the children, apprentices and workmen may gain, on the usual conditions, a Plenary Indulgence :

1° On the day of their admission into the work, as soon as the work has been-united to the Society by the Council general ;

2° On the day of the patronal feast of the work, regularly fixed in each diocese by the Ordinary;

3° On the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin ;

1. Applications for the union of patronages to the Society, as well as for the aggregation of Conferences are to be sent to the Council general, which is entitled to declare that union.

2. See in the Index the address of the President general of the 13th December 1890.

4° On the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph ;

5° On the feast of St. Vincent de Paul ;

6° In articulo mortis ; the Plenary Indulgence is, applicable, in that case, not only to the members of the work, but also to their parents and to the benefactors of that same work ;

7° Finally that same Indulgence may be gained by the directors of patronages and their cooperators four times in the year, on the days fixed by the ordinary, once for all, if, having on the aforesaid days fulfilled the usual required conditions, they have attended, in the course of the year, three times a month the meetings of the Committee of the work.

II

An Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines is besides granted, to the associates :

1° Every time they shall assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass celebrated for one of them ;

2° Every time they shall accompany the mortal remains of their associates to the grave, by reciting a few prayers ;

3° Every time also they shall attend the meetings which it is customary to hold in the month, by adding some prayer at the beginning and the end.

Finally, all these indulgences, and each one in particular, are declared applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

By the Rescript of the 11th May 1892 the Plenary Indulgence granted for the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and for

the feast of St. Vincent de Paul may be gained also within the Octave, that is to say, on one of the seven days immediately following those feasts.

Partial Indulgence granted to the members attending extraordinary general meetings. (Rescript of the 21th May 1892.)

The members of the Society may gain an Indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines on the day they shall attend the general meetings, either annual or extraordinary, of one or several dioceses together and held generally in addition to those which have already taken place four times a year, provided that they pray for the intention of His Holiness.

OTHER FAVOURS

GRANTED TO OUR SOCIETY.

Having recounted the numerous spiritual favours by which the Church seems to have shown a desire to consecrate the existence and organisation of our Society, it is fitting to recall some of the facts and circumstances by which the Sovereign Pontiffs have also exhibited the constant sentiments of paternal interest towards our Society by which they have been animated.

In the first place we will cite the designation by His Holiness Pius IX, on the 1st August 1851, of a Cardinal Protector of our Society; who has become a permanent support and vigilant guardian of the Society's interests with the Holy See. Monsignor Fornari, previously Nuncio at Paris, was the first who filled the office.

We will cite, in the second place, the general assembly held at Rome on the 5th of January 1855, in connection with the festivities that accompanied the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and at which Pius IX, of sainted and glorious memory, addressed to 450 members of our Society assembled there, the following admirable words:—

"Assuredly this is not the least of the consola-
"tions which Our Heart has experienced during
"the days which are passing; this is not the least,

"I say, to find myself in the midst of you, dearly-
"beloved sons, who fortified and enriched by Divine
"grace, that grace which Christ purchased for us,
"and under the protection of St. Vincent de Paul
"who preached and practiced with wonderful
"ardour the works of charity,—have undertaken
"to put in practice that commandment which the
"same Saviour called a new commandment :—
"*Mandatum novum do vobis.* And this new com-
mandment he expressed thus, "Let you love one
"another and love your brethren, not for the
"personal qualities or gifts of nature which God
"has poured upon some among them ; but love
"them simply because each of your brethren, we-
"re he the last among the last of men, is always
"My Image."

"In dedicating yourselves to the practice of this
"commandment, you place yourselves on a ground
"whither the world itself fears not to come, to
"admire the good of which God makes you the
"instruments. A strange thing in truth, and yet
"incontestable: the world, while it depreciates
"every other virtue, is prodigal of praise for the
"works of charity! Humility, chastity, are in its
"eyes only meanness, resistance to natural laws,
"blind fanaticism. Only in the admiration of the
"effects of charity does the world unite with you.
"Protestants, unbelievers, bad Catholics, here
"confound their own feelings with those of
"righteous truth, and raise to the skies the cha-
"ritable works that are accomplished in your
"midst.

"May God then be blessed for having opened to

"you the way for the exercise, not merely of the "works that relieve the body, but also those that "relate to the sanctification of the soul.

"And as these works, in order to be productive "of great fruit, must be well regulated, it is with "a lively satisfaction, that I found, in the Report "just read, the constant intention of keeping your- "selves in perfect accord with and attending to "the counsels of those, who, ordained by God to "be the sentinels of His people, watch night and "day for their sanctification. I bless you also "because I see that it is your further aim to put "in practice that other counsel of the Saviour— "*He who is the first among ye let him make himself* "*the servant of the others* and as He said himself— "*I am not come into the world to be served but to* "*serve*.

"May God then bless your good intentions, your "good-will: may He, for all the days to come, "encourage you to do good."

"And since the world grows colder day by day "and perseveres in works of iniquity, let you on "the contrary animate and rouse yourselves to "practice works of charity—of that charity of "which the world—admires the surface, without "perceiving that, when it is exercised as it should "be among you, it can be compared to an immense "sea that receives into its bosom all the virtues "as so many tributary rivers, and whither flow "not only humility, chastity and zeal, but obe- "dience, mortification, patience and all those vir- "tues that make the perfection and beauty of our "Divine religion.

"Animated by that faith, embellished then by "those virtues, go forth then into the midst of the "world, of that world which one may well call a "corpse shrouded in the shades of death ; and ha- "ving bewailed those sins which those commit "who love the world, having prayed that God may "work the greatest of all miracles, the conversion "of sinners, let all, penetrated with charity cry "out to that dead body with the voice of Jesus "Christ ; depart from the tomb and return from "the death of sin to the life of grace, from the "shades of error to the light of truth, from the "mire of sin to the pure paths of virtue.

"In order that you may be the better able to ca- "complish those excellent works of charity, I bless "you in the name of the Eternal Father, who has "loved us with an eternal charity, and who, when "our first father lost his holy innocence and trans- "mitted in advance to all his children the original "defect, loved us so far as to sign in that very mo- "ment, the merciful decree of our redemption.

"I bless you in the name of Jesus Christ who has "loved us so much, that he shed the last drop of "his Precious Blood, in order to wipe away from "our souls the mark of our eternal condemna- "tion.

"I bless you in the name of the Holy Ghost, and "I pray that Father of the poor, that dispenser of "heavenly gifts, that Consoler of the afflicted, "that he may vouchsafe to shed upon you a ray "of his heavenly light, so that illumined and sanc- "tified by that light, you may be able to lead back "to the right way those souls on whom you lavish

"your benefits, and who have strayed from the "path of virtue.

"I bless you in the name of the Holy Trinity "and may that blessing accompany you all the "days of your life. May it extend to all those "who co-operate in your works of charity, whether "at Rome, in Italy, in Europe, or through the "entire universe.

"I bless you for the period of your mortal cour- "se, and for the last hour of your life, so that "after it you may be blessed of God in heaven for "all eternity.

" Benedictio Dei omnipotentis, Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus sancti, descendat super vos et maneat sem- per."

We will recal also how in 1883 when our Work celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its founda- tion, the august successor of Pius IX. Léo. XIII. not content with granting to all its members and all its poor a Plenary Indulgence to be gained on the occasion, vouchsafed in addition, by a de- licate and most touching attention, to associate with our Jubilee, the new honor which he de- creed to St. Vincent de Paul, by selecting the date to declare him Patron of all the works and asso- ciations of charity which sprang from him.

We shall not fail to record also here the favou- rable judgment passed the following year upon our Society by the Holy Father in his Encyclical *Humanum genus*. Here are the terms in which His Holiness expresses himself :—

" We cannot pass in silence a Society that has given so many admirable examples and deserved

so well of the people. We refer to that which has taken the name of its Father, St. Vincent de Paul. The works achieved by the Society and the object which it has proposed to itself are well known. The efforts of its members tend simply, by a charitable initiative, to lead them to the help of the poor and unfortunate; an end attained with wonderful wisdom and a not less admirable modesty. But the more this Society conceals the good that it does, the better fitted it is for the practice of Christian Charity and the relief of the miseries of men. "

On the occasion of his sacerdotal jubilee, Leo XIII renewed those marks of particular benevolence towards our Society, by receiving on the 4th of February 1888, in a solemn audience and in several succeeding audiences, nearly fifteen hundred of our brothers who had come on pilgrimage to Rome from the most widely separated countries, and recalling to them, in a magnificent discourse, the supreme object of their charitable mission in the world. "We feel, very dear sons, a true satisfaction in seeing to-day the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul so fully represented before Us, and We accept, with all Our heart, the sentiments which animate them, the congratulations and the wishes which you have just expressed to Us in their name.

"It is also for Us a great consolation to be able, on this solemn occasion of Our Sacerdotal Jubilee, to address to your pious Society a word of praise and encouragement, and to confirm the eulogies which, as you have just reminded Us,

have so often, and, We will add, so justly, been awarded to it.

"We know how prosperous your Conferences are every where, and in this prosperity We are happy to see a providential fact. In Our days, more, perhaps, than at any other time, society, which is ailing, feels the need of being relieved by Works of Charity. Charity is the proper and distinguishing characteristic of the true disciples of Jesus Christ. And accordingly our enemies, whose grand aim now-a-days is the unchristianizing of the nations, use every expedient to weaken in the mind the idea and the conception of this virtue, and seek with an insidious refinement to substitute a false and lying charity for true Christian charity.

"To an attempt so audacious and so deadly, it is indispensable that you should oppose an energetic resistance by giving to your charitable works an ever-widening extension, by exerting a holy industry to render their action more penetrating and more persuasive, by spreading the salutary influence of charity to men of all classes, and by applying it as the most efficacious remedy to all the evils, all the needs of society. And all that you must do with an unbounded trust in the Divine strength of that virtue, which knows how to triumph over the most obstinate resistance and to subdue the most rebellious wills.

"Such, dear sons, is the field which is open to your activity and your zeal. You have entered upon it, full of enthusiasm and generosity, guided by the example and under the auspices of the

Apostle of Charity, the great St. Vincent de Paul. Continue to display your pious devotion in it with courage, without fear and without human respect, but at the same time with modesty and without ostentation. Thus, will you give to the world the proof of what the true spirit of Jesus Christ is, and what it can achieve for the advantage and the happiness of humanity.

"That spirit, as you know well, dear sons, does not merely counsel us to come in aid of physical needs, nor to relieve only the miseries of the body. Christian charity aims higher ; it has for its end and final object the spiritual good of souls, their eternal felicity. There is its characteristic mark, its sublime mission—an emanation and a continuation of the very mission of the Divine Redeemer.

"It is by this spirit, We are certain, dear sons, that your Society lives and is inspired ; it is this same spirit of holy and supernatural charity which animates your hearts and makes them beat. Be careful to preserve it in you in all its purity, and endeavour to communicate it to those who surround you. Charity will make of you and of them so many apostles. By it you will re-kindle in many souls that torch of faith which doubt has darkened ; by it you will awaken hope where despair and discouragement are reigning. By charity you will revive in families Christian life, the practice of religious duties, the love of the Holy Church, obedience to her laws, respect for her authority. Such, dear sons, are the precious fruits of Christian charity. May the God of all goodness vouchsafe to bless and to multiply them

in your hands while strengthening you in your pious and arduous works. Meanwhile, and as a pledge of those heavenly favours, We grant to all of you who are here present, and We send to all the Conferences which have delegated you, as well as to the numerous poor families assisted and relieved by them, Our apostolic benediction."

Finally on the 18th April 1893, the occasion of the episcopal jubilee of Leo. XIII, upwards of seven hundred members of the Society who had come on pilgrimage to Rome, were happy to find in the Sovereign Pontiff the same sentiments of benevolent solicitude for our Work and to hear fall from his mouth those paternal recommendations:

"Be always united among yourselves, no matter what nation you belong to, for Christian charity knows no boundaries. Encourage one another in the practice of devotion to the poor and needy; and tell one another of your success and the pious labours of your zeal. Let each of you be more and more penetrated with the spirit of the heroic Saint whose name you bear, and strive to imitate the grand examples he gave you. We pray God to give you the grace to do so through the intercession of Vincent de Paul, pre-eminently the Apostle of charity in modern times; and as a pledge of those heavenly favours We grant you, with all the affection of Our heart, to yourselves and to your families, to the directors of your Conferences, to their Works, and to all your Associates, the Apostolic Blessing."

EXTRACTS FROM THE CIRCULARS

OF THE

PRESIDENT AND SECRETARIES GENERAL

OF THE SOCIETY.

March, 1st 1837.

Gentlemen,—

The intercourse we now begin with you will be indeed most delightful to us. You know that one thing especially supports and strengthens us in this world—it is the thought of having near us friends on whom we can rely for advice and example. They who have friends lead a towfold life, and so do charitable societies when they have sisters.

You have indeed felt the power of such a Christian relationship, when you adopted our prayers and mode of proceeding. It was not the greatness of our deeds that could have struck you, since some of you have witnessed our poverty ; but you understood that men united under the influence of Catholic inspiration impart to each other an immense strength by their prayers, however poor

they may be in other respects. You have therefore become our brethren in order, to share and make us share in such Christian intimacy. We shall all profit, gentlemen, by this precious advantage derived from our faith.

Others hope to relieve without believing. They throw at random a few handfuls of money, that the poor despise as mere crumbs, and of no avail. We, too, do offer very little, because we are little, and because true charity is always poor like those whom it relieves; but we have the charity of the heart, that can multiply our might a hundred fold, and the poor who feel such things welcome us with honour. It is especially for such spiritual alms that we shall mutually be of great assistance, though far distant. When one of our colleagues in Nîmes, Lyon, Rennes, Nantes, or Paris has comforted his poor, we, gentlemen, shall have rendered his task easier by our prayers, and shared in his labours.

Thus, all our Conferences may assist each other by their prayers; they may also render assistance by communicating mutual information. We are happy to think that far from Paris, where the tumult is so great, your charity will make precious discoveries which you will transmit to us, and we shall, doubtless, often regret having so little to offer in exchange. The bonds that will unite us will be those of Catholic charity and brotherhood: there could exist no other ones. Though born a few hours earlier than you, we shall certainly not presume to consider ourselves as your elders: charity forms families, it is true, but it confers no

birthright, except upon those who show more love and devotion.

We inclose the report of the meeting held on the First Sunday of Lent. Henceforward, we shall manage, after every meeting, to communicate the results of our efforts. We hope to hear from you before those meetings, the time of which is determined by our rules.

By informing us of the amounts you have received and disbursed, of the increase in the number of your members, and in that of the poor you have visited, you will often show the power of your charity to us who are weak ; but we shall rejoice at it, for the success of brothers increases the love and esteem between them.

In the first ages of Christiany, the faith that animates us made our fathers write memorable pages, by which they taught each other to bear martyrdom. We, gentlemen, are very far from such sublime virtues, and our pages will surely not reach posterity ; but the homely correspondence which charity inaugurates between us is, nevertheless, due to the same faith. It will not make martyrs, but it will make men that love each other, it will make better men, and for that reason God will perhaps be pleased to make it fruitful and lasting.

LALLIER, Secretary-General.

August, 1837.

Gentlemen,—

We have again joined in prayer to celebrate the festival of our holy Patron. The religious meeting of the different Conferences in Paris, in the church of the Lazarists, on the 19th of July, was followed by the General Meeting, the results of which we now transmit to you.

Besides that, since a relation is established between us, and we have learned to love each other, it seems to us an advantage to discuss, as much as distance will allow, the improvements which our Society will admit.

We may thus mutually impart information, and accustom ourselves to a more beneficial practice of charity.

You know that we consider as one of the principal objects of our labour the visiting of the poor; it is, in some sort, one of the conditions of our existence. Believing one of the strongest ties that can unite us all together to be a community of good deeds, we have resolved to do a little good to some poor families. Our rules treat mostly on this point, and should not be modified in that respect without the gravest motives. In case circumstances should compel us to do so, we ought to substitute other charitable works in the place of that we had adopted in preference. So have done the members of the Conference in Rome. As the distrust of the people made it impossible for

them to visit poor families at home, they have resolved to go to the hospitals and comfort the sick, and principally those of our countrymen who may be there infirm and abandoned (1). But in France the same difficulties do not occur, at least in general, and the visiting of the poor may be adopted by all Conferences.

In Paris, we call on poor families on behalf of the persons who have recommended them to us, and who are, in most cases, Sisters of Charity. Having been informed, through those persons, of their uneasy circumstances, we hope to be able to afford them some assistance, which we state will be very moderate. It is optional with every member to say by whom such relief is offered, or not to do so. Generally it is given as from a few young men who unite to do some good, but very little, because their resources are not great.

When the family has any religion and piety, an acquaintance is soon made, and the visitor has only to let the conversation take its natural course; he always finds means to drop in a few words of consolation and encouragement that are not lost; in most cases, he derives more advantage for himself from what he hears, than he confers by what he says.

When ignorant of the dispositions of the family we visit, we consider it a duty to behave with the utmost prudence and circonspection. As far as

1. For a long time past the Visitation of the poor has been carried on in Rome without difficulty.

possible. we wish to know thoroughly those with whom we deal. If, when unacquainted with their opinions, we yielded to intemperate zeal, we should run the risk of never knowing what is going on in the family. They would conceal their true sentiments and show a feigned love of religion, hoping thereby to get greater assistance from us. Therefore, in our first visits we speak only of the material wants of the family. If we do so with affability and marks of interest, they a length show themselves as they are, and we gradually become acquainted with their habits and opinions. Then the visitor knows how to set to work to recall them to better feelings ; he knows the strong and the weak points of the stronghold he besieges, and with perseverance he sometimes succeeds in taking it: at least he considerably weakens the garrison of absurd and irreligious prejudices that holds it.

We have often noticed that poor people are easily affected by marks of politeness, and we do not neglect this means of gaining their confidence. Taking off one's hat when one enters their dwelling, produces a favourable impression upon them. They are gratified when we accept the chair they offer; they are delighted if we seem to take some interest in the picture of their miseries and the recital of petty household annoyances. By such slight attentions, which cost nothing, a stronger impression is produced; their confidence and affection are sooner gained than by assistance, however plentiful. One is no longer considered by them as a kind of public officer, belonging to some

Board of Assistance, and calling every week to deal out regular supplies, but rather as a friend and adviser, to be applied to in the hard and painful emergencies of life.

However, too great and unguarded familiarity should be avoided. Otherwise the poor would not have that respect which ought to mingle with their affection for him who visits them. One may at times have to give some advice, to make some severe remonstrance. Words, in such cases, would lose a part of their efficacy, if too much familiarity had been used at other times.

In general, we try to remember that example does more than words for the improvement of our fellow-men. The meekness, the kind attentions, the piety of the man who visits a family, go much farther than his exhortations. The first condition imposed on every man who wishes to do good to others, is to watch over himself and persevere in virtue. That we perceive every day. When we are less good, or indifferently disposed, then, too, we are less zealous, less inclined to charitable deeds, to the visiting of our poor families: we even consider this as a sort of touchstone that may show every one of us in what degree he is pleasing to God. If we feel happy when visiting the poor, those representatives of Jesus Christ, if we love them, if we willingly sacrifice a little of our time in order to be useful to them, we may hope to be loved by Him who asks of us nothing but a little love, and who has said that the good done to the poor is done to himself. If, on the contrary, we do not feel desirous to visit our fami-

lies, if we put it off, or do it but reluctantly and in haste, it often signifies that it might be good to examine ourselves and to renew the piety and fervour of our soul.

Thus the work that we undertake of our own accord, is a means of improvement for ourselves: it is a new tie that binds us to virtue.

It has, moreover, a great advantage in these times. Much is said in our days about improving the condition of the poorer classes, and there daily spring up a multitude of systems for so doing, not one of which is applicable, merely because the authors of them do not even suspect how matters stand in reality. We may be called on, at some further time, to give an opinion on this subject. Even now, it is our duty to relieve the sufferings of our fellow-men, as much as our fortune and abilities may allow. How can we do so, how shall we give directions and advice with a sufficient knowledge of the case, and the security of an enlightened conscience, unless we have examined and probed the wound which we undertake to heal?

We shall, therefore, gentlemen, be indefatigable in visiting the poor, because we are convinced that it is, in our days, one of the best methods of serving both them and ourselves.

As for you, do, we request you, in you turn communicate to us your reflexions on so important a matter. You now have our view of it; let us know your own opinions. Another time, we shall speak of other subjects, and by thus exchanging the feeble results of our daily experience, we may

gradually accumulate valuable information regarding the practice of charity.

LALLIER, Secretary-General.

December, 1837.

Gentlemen,—

The last months that have elapsed have done much for our Society. As you may see by the report of our General Meeting in the month of July, three new Conferences have been formed in Paris; also three others in the provinces. Thus the first impulse is given, and before long we shall have Conferences in nearly all the parts of Paris, and in many cities of France. Where we have no Conference, we may perhaps reckon a few disseminated members. Many already are dispersed all over France; they ardently wished for some link to connect them with our Society. Henceforward, this connexion will be established by the report which is to be printed annually and sent to all the members, as was decided at the close of last year.

This extension and the prosperity that seems to await our Society, have called our attention to an important point.

Our Rules had been written at a time when the only Conferences were the four original ones, formed in Paris, and they had become insufficient since many other Conferences had sprung up;

certain articles were even not applicable to the provincial Conferences which had adopted them. We believe that the time has come for supplying these deficiencies ; we should not, from an injudicious respect for an old text, expose ourselves to break, in any point, that unity which we are all so eager to preserve. We have, besides, made as few alterations as possible, modifying only what was not in accordance with the new dispositions.

The chapter which has undergone the most important modifications is that which concerns the directing councils. The direction of the Society was formerly committed to an ordinary Council. That Council consisted of certain general officers, not belonging to the Conferences, and it had been thought proper, in order to connect the Council with the Conferences, and the latter among themselves, to appoint also a Council extraordinary, including, with the general officers, the Presidents of the different Conferences. The latter Council thus indispensably completed the ordinary Council, and was convoked whenever any resolutions were to be passed, and carried out directly in the Conferences. But, as all the Conferences of the Society were located in the same city, the matters on which the two Councils had to deliberate, differed merely in the applications, and therefore no precise distinction had been made between their departments. For that reason it had not been thought necessary to devote two distinct chapters to them. But when new Conferences were established in the provinces, the separate departments of the two Councils became

more clearly distinguished. The extraordinary Council was especially the City-Council, and the ordinary Council alone had to deal with the general interests. Other names have therefore been adopted for them, and it has been decided that the ordinary Council shall henceforward be denominated Council-General, as having charge of the general interests ; and the extraordinary Council, Particular Council, as having charge of the particular interests of the city in which it is settled. Their organization and distinct departments are developed in two separate chapters of the Rules. It is in Paris especially, where the two Councils both exist, that the distinction of their departments is to be preserved: indeed, as immediate directions may be given by the General Council, the Particular Council of Paris, consisting of about thirty members, is rather to be considered as a Central Conference, connecting all the other Conferences together, and where all common interests are discussed. But in other cities, where Particular Councils have been, or may be appointed, the powers of these Councils, as well on account of their distance from the metropolis, as of the few members they include, must rather resemble those of the Council General.

So long as the two Councils had no distinct objects, the same funds were sufficient for the common interests. But as soon as they were separated, the creation of a particular fund, common to the Conferences of the same city, became necessary. There were in Paris private expenses and local charities thad should not be paid by th

central fund. On the other hand, the central fund was originally supported by such extraordinary donations as might be made to the Society in general, and by collections made at the general meetings; but as the provincial Conferences did not assist at those meetings, they bore no part of the general expenses. Those expenses have been very slight till now; but if, as it is to be hoped, and within all probability, our Society should hereafter extend considerably, they will necessarily increase much, and it is proper that the provincial Conferences should be enabled by our Rules to bear their part of that common debt, however inconsiderable. For that reason, we have laid the principle that the provincial Conferences should annually send their offerings to the Treasurer-General. However, they shall do so in the way they deem most proper, and in proportion to their own means, as private members do regarding the offerings they contribute to the fund of their own Conference. Thus all shall bear a part of the general expense, though none shall be bound by what others give; at the end of the year, only the total amount received shall be published, as well as the uses to which it has been applied.

The first paragraph on the organization of Conferences, also had slightly to be modified. By Article 4th of the former rules, the Presidents of the different Conferences were to be appointed by the President General. That article had been intended for the Conferences in Paris, and was not equally applicable to those in the provinces.

Therefore several of the latter, which had adopted our Rules on all other points, were compelled to modify that article. The new Rules give the appointment of the Presidents of Conferences to the President of the Particular Council. That provision is in accordance with the spirit of our Rules. It was spontaneously applied in Lyons, the first city after Paris, where several Conferences were organized and a Council appointed. As for the cities that have but one Conference, the new Rules leave the appointment of the President to the election of all the members of the Conference. That is also what was done in most of the provincial towns where Conferences were established. A few, indeed, have not stopped there, and have decided that not only the President's office, but also those of all the members of the Board shall be elective. Such a custom may be advantageous and even necessary in certain countries, but we have not been able to adopt it, for it is not followed by most Conferences, and it even slightly departs from the spirit of our Rules. It was thought that the different offices in our little Society would hardly be objects of competition; that the fulfilment of their duties would meet with no opposition among brothers all bound together by charity, and it has seemed preferable, in order to secure unity of direction, that all the officers should be appointed by the member whom the general vote has called to the highest office (1).

1. Experience has proved the wisdom of that rule, which is actually accepted every where.

There still remained to provide for isolated members. With regard to them, we have settled that, whenever a member of the Society removes to a town where there is no Conference, he shall be attached, as a corresponding member, to the nearest Conference in his province, and share not only in the prayers, but also in the good works of the Society, by performing deeds of charity around him. Thus a member who leaves his Conference shall not therefore become estranged from the Society; he shall still consider himself as an active member: only he shall fulfil alone those actions which he did before with several associates. In that manner, the fire of charity will not die in him, and if new brothers should afterwards join him, they will find a focus around which they may unite and form a new Conference.

Lastly, in most cities the custom has prevailed of admitting into the Society, either as honorary members, or as subscribers or benefactors, persons who, without actively sharing in its labours, may nevertheless serve it by their influence or their fortune; that was, moreover, but developing an idea contained in the considerations prefixed to our Rules. But every Conference had to adopt certain rules for that development. We have thought proper, in this case, to lay down a general rule that all might observe; and it has been resolved, in the first place, that the Society shall have honorary members, who shall be considered on the same footing as active members, and therefore chosen with the same discernment, and appointed in the same form. However, as in the

cities that contain several Conferences, they take no part in the labours of those Conferences, and do not belong to one more than to another, it seemed preferable then to reserve their appointment to the Council, which connects those different Conferences. In the second place, in order not to neglect the benevolent offers of such persons who, though unable to become members of our Society, do, however, take an interest in it, it has been resolved that every Conference may individually admit certain persons as benefactors, on what terms it may deem fit, and even without any terms at all.

Such are the additions made to the Rules, or rather the development of them in the new edition which we now publish and lay before you. It had long been expected, but the Rules to be adopted were too important not to require mature reflexion. We therefore set to work only when further delay might have deserved censure.

If, while carrying out our design, all have not been consulted, all will see, at least, that we have endeavoured to act in conformity with the spirit that has till now guided our Society, and with general usage. We are therefore convinced that this new edition of our Rules will be received with alacrity by all our brothers. We hope it may, by corresponding with all the developments of our Society, contribute to bind its members more firmly together, and secure its duration. We shall then think we have fulfilled the task imposed upon us.

LALLIER, Secretary-General.

Circular letter of the 14th of july 1841.

Sir and dear Brother,—

Though we seldom correspond by letter, the Christian feeling which unites us in the same labour is not made the weaker ; our mutual wishes for the success of our common endeavours are no less frequent and sincere.

I have, however, been long pressed, both by the Council and my own inclination, to write you this letter, and inform you otherwise than by a mere report, of the point we have reached; of what seems wise and profitable, in order to extend, if possible, the good which God has been pleased to do through us, and at least to maintain what has been done up to the present day.

You know, Sir and dear Brother, what an unexpected extension Providence has given to the Society of *Saint Vincent de Paul,* which we lately did rightly call our *little* Society. At present, this denomination is true only on account of the little we do, compared with all that should be done for those who suffer and need assistance. Let us pray, fervently pray to God, that he may equal our good wook to the number of those who enlist under the holy and charitable banner of Saint Vincent de Paul.

We now reckon, dear Sir, more than sixty Conferences, either in the provinces or in Paris. From the large cities they extend to the less

important towns; they even reach boroughs and villages : the smaller places tend to form a union so as to assist each other; for if the ones contain few that are in want, others in the vicinity are filled with them, and the latter would be unable to afford sufficient relief, were it not for the assistance of their more affluent neighbours.

This sort of revival of practical charity among men (for Christian women had the meritorious privilege, if not of benevolent donations, at least of charitable deeds), this revival is a fact of immense importance, which imposes serious obligations upon us, since it partly originated with us. By corresponding to Divine Grace, we may accelerate and extend it; by neglecting it, we may, on the contrary, retard and restrict it, and thus be an obstacle to the good it promises to the world at large. Effectively, if the sore of pauperism is to be partly healed, it seems likely to be so by that means; if the poorer classes can recover the first riches of all, if they can improve and become again what they are no longer, or at least what they are not everywhere—I mean, become again moral and religious—it seems that it will be by witnessing the examples and receiving, at the same time as relief, the enlightened and Christian advice of men whom their worldly situation has made happier, and has in some manner placed above them. And do not even the latter stand in need of assistance to keep in the right path? What assistance can have more efficacy than praying in common, visiting the poor regularly and in person, and doing all the

charitable actions with the graces that God never fails to attach to them ?

When our first Conference, which had grown too numerous, was separating, and on the point of forming distinct sections, we said : *Let us love our Rules; if we keep them faithfully, we may be sure that they will keep us and our work.* They have, indeed, been faithfully kept by the Conferences; and to that we unhesitatingly refer, in a great measure, the wonderful increase of our Society, and the blessings lavished by God upon it.

Let us, therefore, Sir and dear Brother, be daily more imbued with the spirit of our work; let us consecrate ourselves to all the poor without any distinction; let us always be full of esteem and deference for other charitable institutions ; let us remain in close union with our pastors; let us form but one heart and one soul; let there never arise among us, any more than there has been till now, any dispute of words or discussion of precedence; let us be of no party than that of charity, and not descend to the meanness of sects.

That spirit of mutual abnegation of our members and Conferences, of our Society with regard to all; the truly Christian spirit which has always animated the Association in general, has gained public confidence. On that account have the ecclesiastical and civil authorities in Lyons associated our colleagues of that city in the distribution of a part of the relief afforded by the public to the families ruined by the overflow of the river; on that account are they elsewhere,

and at this very time, requested to assume the management of the Boards of charity, and all the ressources prepared for the sick and the indigent; on that account has the revered Archbishop of Paris entrusted to them the care of guiding, in some manner, his own inexhaustible charity, by requesting them to collect information with regard to the numerous applicants for his assistance ; on that account have our Conferences, at first composed of young men only, been honoured with the accession of many men of virtue, grown old in the practice of good works.

By our Rules we mean especially the *general considerations* prefixed to the Rules properly so called; they set forth the spirit that should animate us, and will for ever impart life to our feeble endeavours, for they are the word of God, the maxims of the Saints, and principally the spirit of Saint Vincent of Paul, wich we have only applied to the requirements of our Society.

As for the Rules, it is possible that, in the course of time, they have been somewhat modified, according to the countries and to the development of the work, but the ground has never changed; each Conference tries to come as near to it as possible; at leat none of them departs from that spirit which has presided over the first drawing up and has dictated the preliminary considerations (1).

1. It is not unnecessary to point out that these and the following lines have been written before that by the granting of two Briefs the general Rule has been sanctioned by the highest authority in the christian world.

Each Conference indeed, Sir and dear Brother, makes Rules according to its wants; we beg only that they do not change too easily what has been adopted; much time is often wasted in discussions about the Rules and peace is troubled, and it is soon found out that those modifications, laboriously established, do not prove more effectual than the Rules for which they have been substituted. What makes powerful and active, what will bring every thing in perfect order in our work, is the sincere love of the poor of Jesus Christ and the brotherly union of all the members of the Society.

We are really animated, as you know Sir and dear Brother, by no other motive than the sincere love of the poor of Christ; no other tie binds us to one another. In our Conferences, in the whole Society, everything is free and voluntary. Our association is an association of hearts, that no law circumscribes, limits, or regulates, except the laws of Christian charity, and an ardent wish to be saved by assisting our brethren in need. No member among us is above another member; no Conference has any right over another Conference.

This letter, dear Sir, and all the intercourse betwen us, is merely in the name of that Christian fraternity. I write because I have chanced to be the first President of the first Conference; then the Conferences grew numerous, and the Society expanded; it therefore seemed useful and sweet to the heart to maintain a connexion between all the different gatherings : it even became

suitable or necessary to adopt regular means of intercourse. Hence the appointment of Secretaries for the correspondence, of a Council that is rather a link than a power, a Council to explain or solve the difficulties which are naturally referred to the original Society.

But all this has been imposed on no one; all is freely accepted and followed. From the Centre to the Conferences, and from the Conferences to the Centre, there is neither authority nor obedience; there may be deference and advice: there are the same end, the same deeds; there is a union of hearts in Jesus Christ our Lord.

I was anxious, Sir and dear Brother, to set forth fully that point in our existence, not in order to loosen the precious ties that unite us, far from it, but in order that the several Conferences may freely carry on and develop their good works; so that it may be known as a new motive of edification among us, that charity, and charity alone, has power to unite men and make them embrace virtue.

Under other conditions, with an organization more regular, more uniform, apparently more energetic, and which the zeal of several of our brothers may wish for on that account; it seems to us that our Society would soon be endangered by its very expansion.

And now, Sir and dear Brother, notwithstanding the above declaration, or rather on account of that very declaration, as I cannot be supposed to give anything but advice, the value of which you may freely appreciate, I shall answer some questions asked by several of our Conferences.

We have been asked if it would not be proper that a Conference should contribute to the establishment of a Catholic paper. We have entreated the Conference that consulted us, and we do entreat all Conferences, to renounce such an idea. Our Society is a Society for action; it is not a tribune: it must never and nowhere become one. How difficult it is for a periodical never to lean exclusively to one side! In that men of the powerful mind have failed. Still more, how difficult, to hurt no one, while constantly discussing! But we exist to relieve pain, not to inflict any. *The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is all for charity,* so say our Rules; *it has nothing to do with politics.* A periodical paper does always, more or less, treat of politics.

We have also been asked if men of honourable feelings can be admitted as members, though not yet Christians. We have answered that the members of the Society should—1stly, do honour to their faith by the practice of a Christian life; 2ndly, be able to assist the poor, however little it might be.

If the latter Rule were not observed, admission to the Conferences would become the object of persons seeking assistance from them, instead of giving any. It is easy to conceive what serious changes our meeting might soon suffer thereby. As for the former Rule, we assuredly are not the judges of our colleagues; we have not to descend into their consciences. We may even, with due caution, admit to our assemblies men who are not yet so fortunate as to follow religion, and to whom

the example of their happier brothers may be profitable; but we have deemed that no one could be inscribed among the members of the Conferences but after embracing and assiduously following the duties which faith imposes upon us. We do, besides, request those who intend to present a candidate, never to fail previously to confer about it with the President, who has more especial charge of the direction and honour of his Conference. The presentation is then made by common agreement between him and the friends of the candidate, and there is reason to believe that it is made because it ought to be. Moreover, we can do nothing better than to refer, on that point, to the general advice contained in the prefatory considerations already mentioned, relying on the wisdom and zeal of each President for the application of these rules.

As for the new Conferences, it is most important that those of our brothers who resolve on establishing them, or who are consulted about their organization, should insist upon the spirit of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, as wholly and solely Christian and charitable. They must not omit either to remind our brothers that the foundation of our labour is the visiting of the indigent in their homes. As for beginning a correspondence with us, the Conferences should apply to the Council General, producing at the same time, whenever they can testimonials from members of more ancient Conferences and well-known clergymen. The Council has, for the future, left with the President-General the power of answe-

ring those demands himself, and complying with the request of the new Conferences (1).

Last of all, Sir, and dear Brother, I cannot finish this letter without this most earnest request: *never neglect visiting the poor in their homes.* The visiting of the poor in their dismal homes is the distinctive character of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul; the Council has even exhorted the Presidents of the Conferences in Paris to go themselves and visit all the familles adopted by their respective Conferences; to visit them every three months, the better to know their wants, and to ascertain whether they are regularly visited. Let us, therefore, courageously enter the foul dwellings which poverty is too often compelled to live in; but it is not enough to enter them; let us sit on the halfbroken chair which is offered us; let us converse with the poor; confidence will thus be gained, and we shall become acquainted with their sufferings, their wishes, may be with their vices themselves. We shall know what advice we ough to offer; we shall cause the children to be sent to schools, to good schools; we shall save them from vagrancy by apprenticing them to some trade. Thus you shall have foresight for your poor, who are often regardless of the future; yea, you shall be their providence, and open better prospects for them. Ah! what a comfort for a young man, to be able during his whole life to turn his looks to a family that he has thus assis-

1. Before answering, the President General takes always the advice of the Council General.

ted, raised from misery, and perhaps rescued from the thraldom of vice! Who can tell what graces God will pour upon his life to recompense the generous deed that has marked its outset? Do, Sir, do often repeat such things to the young members of your Conference, and exhort them thus to honour the outset of their life. To them I promise that God will then crown it gloriously. His word is formal and never deceives.

I must stop here, Sir and dear Brother, and cease this effusion of my overflowing soul. I would say much more when my mind dwells upon our beloved Conferences, upon the labour which God has entrusted to your zeal as well as to mine; that labour which may perhaps gain for us a favourable look from God, or at least appease his anger, and atone for some of our failings.

We shall continue to pray together, and comfort by the same means the poor of Christ, our brethren; we shall continue to love one another in God, under the patronage of the Mother of Charity, the Divine Mother of Jesus. That union will be our strength, much more than our Rules. Though we do but seldom meet, we shall nevertheless know each other well, in the heart of Him from whom every good thought comes; to whom it returns, and to whom we ourselves shall go!

What I write, dear Sir, is not from me, personally; it is from all those of our Brothers whom I have seen; it is more especially from the members of the Council who have desired me to compose this letter, and to whom I shall read it before sending it.

Let me not forget to add they have also requested me to recommend that in your conversations among your Conference, in your reports, there should be nothing against any benevolent institutions, whether public or private, nothing against what is called official charity. We must let others do good in their own way; we must even believe that, in general, they do better and more than we.

And now, in the name of the Council, in my own name, in that of the Conferences you have assisted, I thank you for what you have done in behalf of the poor of our brethren in Lyons and Nîmes, during the inundations. You will receive a detailed account of the sums received and expended.

I remain, Sir and dear Brother, the most devoted of your brothers.

Bailly, President.

Circular of the first of december 1842.

Dear Sir and Brother,

I wish, in the name of the Council General, to confer with you, for a few moments, on the interests of our beloved Society.

Let us first return thanks together to Divine Providence which gives our Society so rapid and encouraging an advancement, and which, by so particular a favour, maintains the true spirit, the spirit of simplicity and charity of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul.

We shall infallibly deserve new advancement and be called to pursue the good we do, and to begin more, if we grow more and more confirmed in that spirit which was that of our holy patron, which appears in his whole life and all his maxims, which presided over our first beginnings, and which we have, as far as possible, inscribed in the introductory considerations of our Rules, or rather in those Rules themselves; for these considerations are our real Rule, that which should inspire all other Rules, and, by giving a common direction to our efforts, preserve unity among us, nothwithstanding the difference of means and usages which different localites may require.

Let us therefore read those short reflections over and over again; let us even meditate over them in the spirit of faith; they are not, if we may say so, the word of man, — or at least they are the word of man sanctified, of a man whose sayings and whole life God has crowned with heavenly glory. Effectively, Sir and dear Brother, you are aware that those thoughts are taken from the most intimate writings of Saint Vincent de Paul, from the Rules which he laid after many years experience for the blessed works that he had instituted, and to secure their increase and duration.

Next to those common precepts which we follow, there is nothing that can better preserve the spirit and unity of the Society than the mutual intercourse of the Conferences; and the Council General, which is, in most cases, the channel of that intercourse, feels every day better what are its own duties in that respect; what it can, what

it should do to connect, to incite to good, through one another, all the assemblies of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, to extend, wherever it can be done, the imitation of the new methods, of the pious devices of charity, that are disclosed and employed in any local Conferences.

The General Report, that has at length been published, does more especially display, dear Sir, all the advantages that may be derived from our intercourse, if properly understood. From all quarters we receive for this important communication thanks and testimonials which gladden our hearts and clearly point out our duty for the future.

We hesitated long before writing this Report, and we then made it as plain and brief as possible, so much do we fear exposing the Society to that public notoriety so unsuited to associations of Christian charity, and which has been the loss of so many !

And, as we speak publishing, we shall mention that, in some Conferences, the custom of printing funeral orations tends to prevail. There are certainly less objections to the praise of the dead than to that of the living ; however, may not vanity, which steals in everywhere, have its share in a public eulogy of our departed brethren ; ought it not to be merely among ourselves that we weep for them and recall for our own edification the memory of their good examples? To us it seems that such manifestations should at least be very rare, and made only in quite particular cases, and after mature consideration.

But, if the publishing of what is good is sometimes liable to objections, the exposing of what is wrong is still worse; so, for instance, should any temporary disagreement arise in one of our assemblies, should any Conference meet with illwill and annoyances abroad, it ought to be most careful not to permit it to be published. Some of our Conferences have earnestly requested that we should make this a general recommendation, and we easily understand the importance attached to it. A wrong made public is scarcely ever reparable. A priest of much wisdom, virtue, and experience, one day said to us that the conversion of any man not publicly engaged in the wrong path is but an ordinary matter, whereas a miracle is required to overcome the obstinacy and pride of him who has bound himself to his errors by public manifestations. In so saying, he alluded especially to unbelievers; but his rule can be applied to others also. If you unfortunately disagree with a person, so long as the matter rests between you and your brother, remedy is at hand, and reconciliation easy; but, if once you are compelled to appeal to public opinion through the press or the law, union can be restored only by a special grace from above. You will find an enemy at every time and place opposing your interests; and a charitable Society, placed in such circumstances, will doubtless have raised an irreconciliable enemy against all other Christian Societies.

We should never forget, dear Sir, that we live to promote union and not division; if we wish to attain that charitable end, we must be ready to

suffer in silence. Are we not the disciples of Him who raised the world by his voluntary humiliations? Have not the Saints been glorified in proportion to their humiliations? Such is the great mystery of the Cross, which you know as well as I, and practice better. To be great, we must lower ourselves, and a Christian association will secure so much the more useful and glorious destinies, as it makes and deems itself more trifling and more humble.

In thus warning you against habitual publicity, we mean it with regard to our personal concerns or those of our Conferences; but we carefully except all projects, attempts and methods for affording our suffering brethren more rapid, certain and abundant relief. Thus we ourselves have encouraged and recommended to you the little *Manual of works of charity,* published in Paris, and which may be had at our Secretary's office. That publication was not made in the name or at expense of our Society; but it was made at our request by one of our Brothers, a member of the Council General. Its object is to show many methods of assisting the indigent, methods which the most charitable man is often ignorant of; and also to enlighten, facilitate, and shorten his laborious and generous efforts.

I shall not close this letter without mentioning a few facts that have attracted our notice, and also transmitting some advice from the Council General.

In a few localities, some Protestants, animated with charitable intentions, have asked to be ad-

mitted into our Conferences. We have thought it our duty to answer that we do not deem it possible to give our separated brethren that proof of affection and of our wish for a more complete and still happier union. Effectively, our object is not only to afford the poor some material relief, but to comfort them, to excite them to the practice of Christian virtues, which is the most efficient of consolations; and therefore to bring them to use the Sacraments and perform all the salutary acts prescribed by the Catholic Church, and which alone do effectually improve, convert, and comfort the heart. But a Protestant cannot loyally and without deceit undertake such an office. We have been asked if it was allowable to apply a part of the funds received by donations or collections in the Conferences, to some charitable purposes different from the works specially adopted by them. To us it seems that it should not be. In the first place, it would be departing from the intention of the donors; in the second, such a latitude might cramp considerably works which we have peculiarly adopted. By aiming at everything we should finally do nothing, for a charitable Society that attempts too much is soon exhausted. By choosing a few good works, we have not promised to apply ourselves to all.

You will excuse me, Sir and dear Brother, if I seem hereby to limit the effects of our zeal; but wisdom should be temperate, and a wish to render your efforts more efficient and durable is my only motive in giving this prudent advice which some may judge too timid.

We should deem it a greater danger if, adhering too litterally to our name of Conferences, the origin of which is well known to you, we were effectively to discourse upon charity instead of being satisfied with doing its deeds. It is the office of our pastors to expose our duties to us; it is ours to discharge them. We have not to teach each other by discourses, but to edify one another by mutual examples. Beware, I entreat you, of the spirit of discussion, and the habits of the public tribune. We do not mean to blame that spirit in itself: discussion is good and necessary, when applied in the places and to the subjects that require it; but our Society is one of action, it should do much and talk little: we must leave to our Officers and Boards the burden of discussing what has to be discussed; let our Conferences in general retain the consoling charge of good deeds. The speeches of the Conferences are the common prayer to God; His divine Mother and our Holy Patron; the christian exhortations and consolations to the poor.

On such terms, but on such alone,—by being a Society of good works, without or above all parties and political sects,—will the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul live and continue its successful advance.

In a few Conferences, it has happened that some members, detained by their business, have called the poor to their houses to give them at the same time good advice and effective relief, instead of going to visit them in their homes. That is less contrary to our institution than sending assistance

to the poor through servants ; the latter method can never be too severely reproved; nothing would more radically destroy the spirit of the Society. There has, however, been but one single instance of such an abuse, and you know how strongly we remonstrated; we sounded the alarm, as if the enemy had been at our gates. We trust the sound is still in every ear, and we shall be so watchful of one another, as never to allow such a misfortune to re-occur.

As for the other method just mentioned, we also disapprove of it. The foundation, the very essence of our labour, is the visiting of the poor in their dismal homes ; we must see them in rags, amidst all the disorder and distress of their misery, improvidence and discouragement. Such a sight is both a lesson to us, and a motive of devotedness to them. Should they come to us, instead of our going to them, the same result would not be obtained. Is it not plain also that the spontaneous visit of the member who brings assistance, secures for him a moral ascendancy over the indigent family, that will never be obtained when a person of that family comes and listens to him with interested views ? Let us, besides, look still higher : the poor are the friends of Jesus Christ; they are His members, they are Himself ; Christ considers as done for His Divine Person what is done for any of them. Saint Vincent de Paul says "that he who speaks to a poor man and bestows charity upon him, ought to figure to himself and be well assured that he speaks to Jesus Christ Himself, and assists the Divine Sa-

viour in person." Which of us does not envy the shepherds of Bethlehem their happiness? Well, that happiness we too enjoy when we visit with faith the poor in their homes, in their humble mangers, I might nearly say in their stables. Like those happy shepherds, let us then eagerly perform that pious duty; let us run to the cellars, the garrets, wherever the Divine Child suffers in the persons of the poor; let us approach those wretched hovels with respect, veneration and love; we must yield that privilege to none. A great favour was granted to a few humble shepherds on the very night of our Saviour's birth; and a great favour also is allowed the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, in being called to the honour and the benefits of visiting the poor. Let us never suffer so glorious an advantage to be diminished, let us visit the poor of Christ, visit them ourselves, visit them in their homes.

BAILLY.

Circular of the 1st of march 1844.

Sir and dear Brother,—

From several quarters we are asked to renew communications such as those formerly transmitted, and between which complaint is made that we have left too long an interval. It had seemed to us that the General Report, now published yearly, could and should take the place of many other

means of mutual edification and intercourse. It contains, for the example of all the Conferences, the charitable efforts made by each of them ; it relates, whatever is of importance to the Society, the usages that should be followed; it cautions us against the abuses and dangers to be avoided. However, the call is so kindly made, and so strongly expressive of the spirit of union that animates the whole Society that it will not allow us to remain deaf to it; we therefore, address this letter to you, in order to answer both your wishes and those of our own hearts, always happy when they pour themselves into yours.!

There are, besides, a few rare subjects for which there is no room in a communication of so general a character as is the Annual Report ; those we shall consider in a special manner...

We have observed in our brothers a double tendency or a double and contrariwise apprehension : some of them are frightened by the lay character of our Society; others think that it would be prejudicial to the work, if it were to be raised to the dignity of a Brotherhood.

We think that we must remain what we are and that all our wishes and all our endeavours should tend to that end. Let each of us become more christian and more charitable ; let us praise to their highest value and esteem for superior to our Society the other christian associations, those brotherhoods, so much honoured for the good they have accomplished, for their long standing, for the virtues and the piety of their members. Let us deserve to be personally admitted into them, but,

on the other side, let us undestand that the needs may change according to times ; that the works, founded on faith, however unchanging in their principle they may be, have always been modified in their action according to those various needs. And if we do not want to trouble ourselves more about it, it is enough to know that our Society exists in the capital of the Christian world with the approbation of the common Father of the faithful; that it is blessed by the Church in all the countries, where it tries to establish its modest works ; if there is still anything wanting in our Society, if in some degree its form has to be modified and improved, let us be patient; time will do better than ourselves. God never fails to support right and peaceful intentions; what he condemns and repels, what is beforehand rendered barren or even becomes a seed of death, are the restlessness and the exertion of mind as well as empiricism in spiritual things. More improvement and more useful reforms are obtained by the spirit of peace, by moderation and by good examples, than by all the rules and all the endeavours of a so called zeal, whereas under that name self love and exceeding attachment to our personal ideas are to easily disguised.

And even though our Society, in its actual state, should only be for the Christians the means of knowing and understanding each other, although it should be but a vast noviciate, which, as it already happens every day, would supply with members other works, better and holier than ours, would it not be yet a grand mission, chiefly if that

noviciate is performed under the protection of and on practising the first of all virtues, the immortal virtue of charity? Would it not be for us a sufficient motive of clinging invincibly to what may be and is really the spring of so much other good, and, on trying to keep pure that precious spring, of leaving and making it accessible to as many of our brothers as possible?...

As for the qualifications to be sought for in our Presidents and other Officers let us never forget the rule laid down in this pious maxim: neither science alone, nor piety without other advantages, does render a man fit for the conduct of his brethren, and the affairs of God. Teaching is for the minds rich in human knowledge: *doctus est, doceat nos.* As for the men to whom Heaven has granted the invaluable gift of piety, let them pray, pray earnestly for their brothers: *pius est, oret pro nobis.* He alone is marked out to be the servant of the rest, to lead and direct in christian works, who joins an acknowledged superiority of mind with a mind truly in accordance with his faith, a great spirit of conciliation and prudence: *prudens est, regat nos.* Time brings on experience, and experience is a great master; it often gives in a great measure, that wisdom, that ability to judge the minds of other men, that support never to be discouraged, in short that prudence, the first virtue of those who are called to the management of men and affairs; but even here we should not be absolute. Let us remember that we are dealing with things of the faith, and not with human things; and God inspires whom he chooses, and as he

chooses. Saint Bernard, when still a youth, was already the head of a vast reformation; and if we may compare little things with great ones, we shall ask if those of our Conferences which are managed by quite young men have always been the least in fervour and wisdom? The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was begun by a few young men, and for young men; therefore a peculiar virtue seems attached to their action among us, at the same time that a great portion of the favour with which the public views our Society, comes from its being known to consist principally of young men. But, in order that it should continue recruiting among the youth in the schools and other situations of life, the young men must be set forward among us, they must appear in the first rank. However, our choice shoul fall only upon such of our younger brothers as unite modesty and precocious wisdom with true piety, and are, in their turn, always mindful to have recourse to the counsels of age and experience.

The men to whom God has granted wealth and leisure, are bound to the performance of a greater number of works of charity: those acts for them take the place of the anxieties of business and the incessant toil to which humanity is doomed: they seem, therefore, more fit than others for the direction of those christian societies that require much time. However, let us not be exclusive in that respect. All conditions, all ranks are and should always be confounded in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul; moreover, if charitable deeds ought to fill the time of the man of wealth, they ought

also to suspend and sanctify the cares of the public man, of the man devoted to a liberal profession or engaged in the toils of trade; and even we may often find in the latter an experience of men and things which the former does not always possess.

First of all, then in the interest of our Society let us consult the requirements of each locality; let us be grateful if those of our brethren consent to direct us, whom we shall deem more able to maintain among us the original spirit of the Society, its wholly christian spirit, its spirit of peace and simplicity, its modes of action, its accepted and salutary proceedings, the charitable union and activity of its members.

But, at all events, instead of wasting valuable time in useless operations and discussions, let us go to our little good works, and give them all the time and leisure it has pleased divine Providence to grant us; let us continue that visiting of the poor in their homes which has been the first employment of our Society, which is all our Society, that visiting which will make it live, which has already borne so great fruits of salvation, and will continue to sanctify us, if we faithfully adhere to it. What sublime and salutary thoughts, what useful reflections on ourselves are effectively inspired by visiting the poor and conversing with them! Thereby we daily learn to know their misery better, and thus better to appreciate what we ourselves have received from God. Of that let us mention one single instance: we have lately found out that many poor in Paris do and can

spend but one farthing a day for fuel. Who then will find no superfluity in what he spends for himself; who would not accuse himself should he allow the unfortunate to suffer from cold, when it seems possible to relieve them at so cheap a rate?

The visiting of the poor is then our great, our only business; that which should first of all engross the time of the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. The patronage of children has, I acknowledge, taken much development among us, because indeed that patronage is a natural and necessary consequence of visiting well understood, of the conscientious and christian visiting of the poor. How could we not feel inclined to take an interest in their children, in the salvation and future welfare of those little and interesting creatures of God, deprived of human assistance, to whose help heaven itself seems to call us by sending us into their parents' wretched dwelling?

If to the visiting of the poor, well and regulary performed, we add, dear Brother, a true spirit of charity to each other, the future success of our Society is assured, and God will heap His blessings upon it.

I mean here charity in its fullest extension: I mean that every Conference should rejoice in the progress made by other Conference; that, in every one of them any good thought, any good deed should be confidently and joyfully welcomed. We are all brothers, there are among us no masters that can command the rest; we owe and merely

give each other friendly and brotherly advice. Let that advice be given and received in the same spirit; thus disposed we shall reject no reasonable proposal, no serious improvement; nothing is so injurious to the union of a Society and its progress, as a tendency to fear every manifestation, whatever it may be, to suspect from the first, or even to reject every idea that did not originate with ourselves, to subject to a rigorous and impossible uniformity, and to the same measurement the free and spontaneous actions of our brethren, the different wants of several localities.

Our Society is essentially free; besides, every one of us is variously acted upon by divine grace; every one has his own way of doing good; we should not impede then the various manifestations of the Holy Ghost; also our Society extends to many different places: now good, to be good, must be done according to the spirit, tendencies, necessities of those places. We must, doubtless, guard against exaggerated condescension; it is true that every spirit is not holy; but till we have proof, or at least plausible reasons for suspicion, we should welcome every intention that seems good, every effort that appears to be made for God. Moreover we learn from experience that many things, which in themselves were good, have become afterwards vitiated in the execution, solely because they had been rejected without sufficient cause, and by a first impulse, which raised a spirit of opposition and contention, where at first there were but good intentions and worthy desires.

How many good resolves have often failed, how

many exemplary sacrifices, on the eve of execution, were stopped because some one provoked and as it were imposed them! We must know how to suggest what is good, if we wish to obtain it; above of all, we must not refer to ourselves and take as our own what has been proposed and done by others. Humility allows us to conceal and forget our own charitable efforts; justice commands us to give to every one what belongs to him. In short, let the Presidents, the members of the Councils, let all the Officers never forget, we again beseech them, that Christian prudence is no less a virtue than zeal; let them never forget that that virtue alone entitles them to any influence over their brethren.

I have long been, Sir and dear Brother, a sharer in your labours; I do not hesitate to say, from my knowledge of the Society, and of the manner in which it has grown up, that it owes its institution and progress to that spirit of justice, confidence and true charity, to that christian freedom with which it has constantly been animated. If, therefore, dearest Brother, as I have often wished and asked if the time had come when another should, together with the Council general, become the link and centre of our common union, if I had to take leave of you, and make, as it were, my last will, these should be my parting words: Be indulgent and just to one another; oppose no good intention among yourselves, do not oppose any kind of good; those who are called Presidents have no mission but to preserve order, to maintain and encourage whatever is good. On that

depends your union, which is your life and strength.

Be therefore closely united; let the provincial Conferences continue to support by their example those in Paris, let the latter do the same for those in the provinces. Let us be true brothers, happy and not jealous of our mutual advantages; brethren, nothing else, but brethren in Jesus Christ, united by the closest ties of charity, under the patronage and supreme direction of the Church our mother.

To those counsels shall I add, that nothing could be more opposed to the original spirit mentioned in this letter, than to seek fame, splendour and external applause! The General Report, let it be well understood, has not been adopted with a view of ostentation and publicity; we have considered it in the first place as a means of brotherly union and holy emulation between the Conferences; we have, besides, hoped through it to avoid the necessity and supply of many different and expensive publications. We ought especially to manage so as to attract as little as possible the notice of the public papers; we might almost blame some Conferences that have courted or used the publicity of their provincial papers.

Let us also carefully forbid ourselves collections in private houses; they too easily give rise to suspicion against those who undertake them, and they are liable to shocking abuses. The name of our Society has already been several times usurped by persons, who have thus obtained important sums of money. I am well aware that such

abuses are rather to be feared in large than in small cities, and most of all in Paris; but that method of securing assistance for the poor is every where objectionable, and besides the civil authorities may have the legal right to forbid it. Let it therefore be well understood every where that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul makes no collections in private houses for the relief of the poor.

The Society has nothing to do with girls' schools in any place; that care it leaves to others. The original Conferences had all agreed on that subject, which I recall for the information of the new ones...

Shall I conclude, Sir and dear Brother, with some news for your edification? Shall I tell you that the Conferences generally evince a holy and happy emulation for good; that not only your colleagues labour for their own sanctification, but even hope, in some localities, now and then to assemble their poor and make them hear the words of salvation from those whose mission it is to teach the Gospel: that moreover, God lavishes his favours upon us, that he deigns to encourage our weakness by the support every where heartily offered, either by the magistracy or the private citizens; that the bishops continue to bless us with an effusion which should make us feel secure in the present and confident in the future? But all that will be transmitted in due time and more at length. For the present I have only to say that the Council, to which this letter has been communicated, shares in all the feeling and wishes

expressed in it and assures you, dear Brother, of its sincere affection. Mine you know already; allow me to renew the expression of it, and to be respectfully yours.

BAILLY.

Circular of the Council-General dated june 11th 1844.

Dear Sir and Brother,

The Council General herein transmits to you the letter by which Mr. Bailly communicates to the Presidents of the particular Councils and Conferences, the determination which he announced to the Council General at meeting of the 9th of May:

"Sir and dear Brother, my last Circular must have made you foresee what I do now declare: I have tendered my resignation to the Council General; henceforward another President, a Brother who can devote more time to the Society, one better qualified for the office by his station and virtues, will, with the Council, bind the Conferences together.

"I was, in some manner free from domestic cares, when the Society of Saint Vincent of Paul first arose. Our Society itself, still small, required less time. My family is now numerous, and our work has taken immense extension. Your prosperity on the one side, imperative and more multiplied duties on the other, have imposed upon me

the necessity of a resignation which my own interest and that of the Society equally require.

" For a long time already the assistance of several of our Brothers had been indispensable to supply my own deficiency, and I can never return adequate thanks for what they have done, both for me and the Society; these thanks are especially addressed to the Secretaries of the Council General, and of the Council of Paris; never shall I forget their zeal and kindness, the confidence they have shown me, the pains they have taken, the time they have sacrificed.

" I have now, dearest Brother, but two things more to do, equally dictated by my heart: firstly, to tell you how deeply I feel the confidence with which you have honoured me since the origin of your Conference, and which by constituting the centre of the Society, has given it more strength than any slight service I myself may have done it; secondly to beg your pardon for all the good that I have either not done, or done badly.....

" And, since I speak of advice, Sir and dear Brother, though I am no longer entitled to give it, allow me to remind you of a saying of our holy patron. Saint Vincent de Paul, you know it well, held " that those who wish really to be called ministers of charity, should not even speak among themselves of the earthly interests that divide the powers of the world. " That rule indeed he meant for priests; but it may in a certain degree apply to all the christians who associate together for works of mercy. They should keep it, if the wish to remain in cordial union, and enjoy that tacit

and universal approbation which constitutes the influence of a Society, facilitates its progress and secures its duration. We have often repeated that maxim ; it is one of the traditions to which we have adhered from the first ; for us, it is inseparable both from the labours of the past and the interests of the future.

" Now farewell, Sir and dear Brother, farewell. I should grieve still more than you, did I not believe that this farewell, which is not a separation, let me say it again, will more than ever unite us in Jesus Christ. I close with the words addressed to our Brothers, when the first of all the Conferences had, on account of the number of its members, to divide into several sections : " Be of good courage, gentlemen : assembled or dispersed, far or near, let us love each other, love and serve the poor... Much evil is going on ; let us do a little good. " What was then said to your predecessors we now repeat to you, our younger Brothers, we say to all the members of the Society : let us all do, do promptly, do a little good, and God will repay us a hundred-fold.

" Farewell again ; I am ever your respectfuld and devoted Brother. "

BAILLY.

We need not tell you, Sir and dear Brother, with what deeply felt emotion the Council General has received this letter of Mr. Bailly. Indeed, you all know, and none of us will forget that it was Mr. Bailly who, in 1833, at a time when many good men, still afraid, stood aloof from good

works, conceived the thought of assembling for charitable purposes, under the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul, a few young men, very far from expecting the happy increase which we now witness. It was he who supplied them with a place of meeting, who assisted them with his advice, encouraged them hy his example: he taught them to draw near one another for mutual support, to recruit abroad, to help the poor, and in short whatever they learnt in that first year, when from their little meetings came the demand that caused the Predications in Notre-Dame to be instituted. When our ranks had filled up, and we had to reduce into rules what had been mere usage, Mr. Bailly wrote the introductory considerations, wholly inspired by the maxims of our holy Patron, that determined the spirit of our Society. By developing them in several circulars, by all the acts of a laborious presidency, for the space of eleven years he preserved unity amidst the increasing number of our Conferences in Paris, the departments and abroad. Our gratitude has no more bounds than our respect, and if we dare not here give it more solemn utterance, it is solely to conform to the traditions of humility established by himself: we respect the secrecy of his good works, and leave to God the care of rewarding a life, so much of which has been spent for the good of christian youth and in the service of the poor of Jesus Christ.

As soon as Mr. Bailly had informed us of his irrevocable determination, our first impulse was earnestly to beg him to remain one of the Council. We represented that, though he might cease

to be the President of the Society, he should never cease to be its founder, and that as such he still owed, he should always owe to it the support of his experience and his kindness. We are happy to announce that Mr. Bailly has yielded to our unanimous wishes.

After fulfilling that first duty, the members of the Council immediately took the steps preparatory to an election, and tried to agree as to the person that might seem worthy to succeed to our late President. Impressed with a deep sense of the responsibility they had to bear, they sought to secure their conscience by two methods: the one was prayer, the other, a scrupulous observance of the Rules. For a week the Holy Ghost was invoked with fervour, and Mass offered up with that intention: three meetings were held on the 15th, 18th and 21st of May, to confer without precipitancy, passion or restraint; and after mature deliberation, the following points have been agreed upon:—

It was first acknowledged that in a growing Society, the principal object of which is to forward the revival of faith and charity among men and in which is to be found every shade of age, habit and human opinion, the office of President calls for numerous qualities, a rare merit and a man that can hardly be found, unless God should point him out. He must have great piety, in order to be an example to all, and perhaps still greater gentleness, in order not to discourage others by too rigid virtues: he must have the habit of devotedness, the spirit of true fraternity, the experience of good

works; he must join with the zeal which founds, that prudence which preserves; he must be able to maintain the Society in the paths of simplicity and prudent liberty, along which God has led it until now, and nevertheless not discourage the well inspired efforts that may be manifested. In short, his character must attract confidence, and respect, while his gentle familiarity renders him the friend of the younger members in the numerous family united around him.

These qualifications the Council has found united in the person of a man who had honoured the Society by joining the Conference of Saint Sulpice; a man whose consummate wisdom and high virtue have long since deserved public esteem, whose name is well known to the poor, loved by Catholics, respected by men of all opinions, Mr. Gossin, formerly a Counsellor in the Royal Court of Paris, the Founder and President of the admirable Society of Saint Francis Regis. Mr. Gossin is one of those men seldom met with in our days, solely divided between his family, study and good works, whose mature age, full of energy, can suffice for all labours, and whose noble heart is capable of every act of devotedness. The Council General unanimously proposes his name.

In thus informing you, Sir and dear Brother, of our preparatory deliberation, and whilst awaiting the time when the election is to be made, we request you, according to our Rules, to inform your Colleagues of the steps taken by the Council General. Secure in the consciousness of having followed no human consideration, we ask you to assist us

by your prayers and fraternal advice. In compliance with Article the 40th of the Rules, you will be so kind as to consult your Brothers, and have the *Veni Creator* recited in the Conferences, while the election lasts. In a matter of such importance, we need all the inspirations and blessings of God. To Him alone belongs the right of choosing the instruments of the little good He allows us to do, of blessing him that He has used till now, of selecting him that He is henceforward pleased to employ, and rendering his mission easier by our zeal, our habits of christian simplicity, our warm and persevering union.

Believe us, etc.

For the Council General
the *Vice Presidents,*

A. F. Ozanam ; Léon Cornudet.

The *Secretary,* Louis de Baudicour.

Circular of the 15th of august 1844.

Sir and dear Brother,—

The Council General of our beloved Society, after strictly complying with the prescriptions of the Rules, on the 23rd of July, elected a President-General of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul. Their choice having fallen upon me, notwithstanding my deficiencies, and the objections I had the

honour to submit to them, requesting that they should appoint some other person less unworthy than I am, it was my duty no longer to decline the burden imposed upon me: I have therefore accepted it. On the same day, I assumed the office, and two days later, on the 25th ult., I presided at the General Meeting of the Paris Conferences, under the auspices of our Most Reverend Archbishop.

At the same time that I inform you, dear Sir, of this change in the situation of one of your newest brothers, I feel compelled to express in this place, my feelings of deep gratitude to the Conferences of Paris, the departments, and foreign countries, which although I was not personally known to them, have evinced, in placing me at the head of the Society, a promptness and confidence, such as claim a whole life of devotion in return. I eagerly embrace the new and serious duties imposed upon me; no sacrifice will seem too great for their fulfilment.

It required nothing less than so kind and affectionate a unanimity to induce me to succeed in the place of Mr. Bailly, to whom all the Conferences have so justly paid the heartfelt tribute of their gratitude and regret.

Mr. Bailly was the founder, the moderator and the father of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. The eminent services rendered by him in those different capacities are of a character to be ever remembered.

Not only is the very idea of the Conferences due to him: but it is by the wise and cautious exercise of his authority, by the cold and guarded manner

in which he received every proposal of *innovation* that he succeeded in giving to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul the spirit of simplicity, humility and cordiality which distinguishes it, and in which it has till now found both its ornament and strength.

In the time of Saint Vincent de Paul himself, some men of ardent and restless spirits pretended that that great servant of God was too timid and inactive. The clever men of his days, now forgotten, gave the name of weakness to the high prudence of our admirable patron (1). The event has justified, Saint Vincent de Paul whose creations all subsist after the lapse of two centuries.

But Mr. Bailly will not need time in order to be justified, for the Society has had, and still has but one voice to proclaim that the patience, mildness and thorough understanding of the temper of youth, with which Mr. Bailly seasonably tightened or relaxed the reins, have saved our Society from many of the perils that surrounded its cradle, as well as the first steps of its incipient youth.

May your new President, Sir and dear Brother, when he shall, in his turn, resign his honourable burden, deserve from his own successor the truthful testimony which I here bear to Mr. Bailly, for the sacred claim he retains to our attachment and remembrance !

But, with the exception of that great change, now accomplished, that has called by general vote

1. It is related in the memoirs of the time, that a man of virtue, but of violent and misguided devotion, had dared apply to *Mr. Vincent* the scornful epithet of *milksop*.

one of your brothers to hold the place which Mr. Bailly so worthily filled, the Association of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul remains unaltered. On the one hand it renounces none of its works; on the other, it does not wish to step beyond its sphere, the modesty of which is so well suited to its humble charity and limited resources.

You know the object of our Society : it is, not to hold discussions on charity, but to practice it, using as our principal means visit to the poor at their homes.

The members of the Conferences have besides in view *to do good to themselves,* first by learning, if I may say so, the history of material life among us; I mean by learning how thousands of unfortunate persons, some of whom have enjoyed a brilliant position, live, languish, suffer and die unnoticed by the world;

Secondly, by nourishing in their own hearts the feelings of compassion placed there by God, but which require to be cultivated by the practice of good works, purified and supported by religion in order to rise to the dignity of *christian charity.*

Thirdly, by promoting acquaintance among themselves, mutual esteem and affection, notwithstanding all their imperfections : by taking advantage for a closer connexion of that sort of *ready-made* friendship, to which heaven itself has seemed to invite us, by making us children of the true Church, of that Church which draws its life from the charity of Jesus Christ, *the eternal suavity of angels*

and men, according to the admirable expression of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Fourthly, and lastly by inspiring all with an ardent and sincere love of their country, the happy birthplace of every species of kindnesss, devotion and sacrifice; of France, where alliance of generous hearts in favour of all kinds of sufferings and miseries, is so prompt, easy and lasting, and for which, says Bossuet, *God seems to have felt at all times, something more paternal and tender than for other nations.*

The Society will preserve, as heretofore, its lay organization and its lay direction, for its prosperity and even its existence depend on that condition. However we shall congratulate ourselves on remaining in frequent, close and respectful communication with the clergy, entirely convinced as we are that the Catholic priests will be for us the guardian angels who alone may maintain us on the way of christian charity.

If it is possible for us to give material help to our poor and to say to them discreetly a few encouraging and comforting words, yet it has not be given to us who are mere laymen and christian without any authority, to search into the conscience of the poor, in orden to know its wounds, to fathom and to heal them. Passions of all kinds, vices, remorse, weariness of life, despair and those numberless sorts of misery, that the soul is a prey to, are far above our science, and, in any case, our competency.

A special mission has to be given by God to cure such miseries ; if your hands have not the power

which comes from the blood of Jesus Christ, if you do not speak with the authority of His word, you cannot undertake the resurrection of a lost soul and make it again the reflection and the likeness of its Creator. How great indeed is in that admirable work of the regeneration of repenting sinners the share of merit to be got by the layman, who, after bringing on and encouraging regrets and amends for lost innocence and whole a disorderly life, has hastened, without losing any time, to call the heavenly healer! But the complement and the final stamp of conversion are due to the priest, who alone may say the words of eternal life ; who alone has the power of purifying, reviving and comforting the poor human heart ; who even lastly, by the conversion of only one sinner, may bring joy into Heaven.

Blessed be also, for our poor and for ourselves, those precious bonds which, without infringing upon our customs and our ways, will unite us more and more to the clergy.

Let us reckon as our happiest days those on which the priests and, from time to time, the princes of the Church, our fathers in faith, deign to share in our little works and looking favourably at our zeal, consent to honour us with their presence and to enrich us with their blessings.

On teaching us often, on sometimes listening to us with interest, on always understanding us and, in the midst of their labours and their care, accepting as a distraction and a rest, to be our advisers and our models in the pursuit of charity, that they are so well acquainted with, those men of

so high and at the same time so forbearing a virtue, have become our *greatest benefactors,* since they have bestowed on us, as soon as they have known us, the protection of their esteem and the encouragement of their friendship.

Let us return thanks to them a thousand times for so much kindness! I feel very happy to pay here to our holy Bishops and to their cooperators the homage of our attachment and of our constant veneration.

Whe shall never cease to do our good works, banishing from our assemblies whatever might, far or near, resemble politics. In fact, we are assembled to do good to the poor *and to ourselves*, by improving our hearts and minds. But politics, which have caused the shedding of many tears, have never been able to dry a single one. Let them therefore be ever banished from among us. So long as God, in His mercy, averts from our assemblies that perpetual leaven of discord, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul will be prosperous, and reap the blessings of the poor. On the contrary, if we were to allow the voice of politics to be heard ever so little among us, the morsel of bread which we give to the poor would change to stone, and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul would be destroyed.

Such is the light, Sir and dear Brother, in which I have always viewed and do more than ever view our Society. I dare say no member of our many Conferences considers it differently. Such a concurrence of all minds and hearts on those capital points, on which the Society of Saint Vincent de

Paul is founded, is, we must confess, a signal grace of God, a most special and singular mark of the protection with which He deigns to cover it, and lastly a precious indication of its duration and progress, as well as of the abundance of fruits of peace, consolation and salvation which it seems destined to bear. Our gratitude for so great a favour should excite our piety to thank God every day; for it may be said without exaggeration, that thereby most of all, the protecting hand of a kind Providence over us has made itself visible to all eyes.

As for the action of the President of the Society, in concert with the Council-General, it remains what it was under Mr. Bailly. Mr. Bailly has said it in his circulars: the President and Council-General are nothing but links intended to connect the several Conferences, and preserve among them the spirit which presided over the institution of the Society and its developments.....

The sole object of the President and Council is, I say so again, to preserve among all the Conferences that identity of feelings, affections and practices, which have till now been the charm, prosperity and harmless force of our Society.

The members of the Council-General who have seen the birth of the Society are the elders of the family; without claiming for themselves the least privilege of birthright that might be onerous or offensive to the others they merely say to their younger brothers far dispersed: "*Dear friends, in our father's house we did this, abstained from that, and every one was the better for it. See if*

you wish to preserve those traditions of your birth-place."

It is then to be hoped that, through this affectionate intercourse, which will always be, on our part and with the grace of God, very far from every taint of pride and desire of domineering, we shall continue to agree, and especially to love one another. Yes, we shall be able to keep up in Conferences that happy likeness of a common origin, which makes us at first sight recognize our blood, family, and even the effect of the sweet milk sucked at the breast of the same Mother, Catholic charity taught by Saint Vincent.

Such are, Sir and dear Brother, the truths I had to acknowledge, the hopes which I deemed it my duty to express on entering the office to which I have been called. The union which is the charm of our Conferences, can only gain by these first effusions; but I heartily wish for the opportunity of forming with you, and our Brothers of the departments and abroad, a still closer connexion. That wish may be fulfilled.

It will often happen, Sir and dear Brother, that some members of your Conference will come to Paris, either on business, instruction or amusement; I shall feel highly gratified if they do me the honour to call upon me, and I hope not to forget in these intewiews, which will always be precious to me, these charming and ingenuous words of our holy Patron:

"Cordiality is a joy fell by our hearts when we see a person we love; it is a gushing of the heart by which we show we are glad to be with a bro-

ther. That joy spreads over the whole person ; it is a fruit of divine love, united with that of our neighbour. If charity were an apple, cordiality would be its colour. "

Believe me, etc.,

JULES GOSSIN.

Circular of the 8th december 1844.

Sir and dear Brother,—

The sole object of my circular dated August 15th, was to inform you that our Society had a President, and that nothing else was altered in the happy relation that makes all the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul one and the same family. I was obliged to reserve for a further communication several subjects of interest and importance. It is of one of these I now wish to treat.

To love our Society the offspring of the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul is the first condition for fulfilling with zeal the serious but most sweet duties it prescribes ! To cease finding any pleasure or interest in its assemblies, or merely to attend them at rare intervals would be almost to take indefinite leave and withdraw from the career of charity. It should not be misunderstood, the day and hour of our meeting call upon us to be this day what we were a week ago. We have taken charge of one, two or three families ! shall we neglect to

go to the meeting where we are sure to get some relief for them? We shall not dare to do so, if we think of that *really daily* bread which the Conference deals out only for a few days, that none of us is allowed to save and hoard up for the wants of the future, and which is to fail to so many hungry mouths unless we take the trouble to go for it.

Woe to us if we should yield to the temptation of making our alms separate from the rest, and visiting the poor independently, only when we feel disposed and quite at leisure. We must not deceive ourselves; our virtue is always deficient in some place and weak on some point or other. We must especially guard against the inconstancy so natural to man. It is therefore useful for our poor, and most useful for ourselves to be warned and in some manner summoned by the hour and day of our meeting, to be punctual in doing a little good. A virtuous man needs that kind of periodical call in order to remain the same. Should we once set aside the yoke (however light and mild) which our Society lays upon us, should we resolve to do good to the poor at our most convenient hours, separately and free from the example and assistance of our brothers, it is greatly to be feared that, amidst our occupations, business and pleasures, the time reserved for our poor families will recur but seldom, or even never. The poor will be put off from day to day, and then finally dismissed. Pretexts will never be wanting to banish troublesome recollections, that are not exactly remorse, but resemble it. In short, our

slothful charity will seek its justification, and believe it has found it in the few coins that we may have thrown, once a year, in the charity-box of a church.

Let us be candid, and not seek to delude ourselves. Did we often go and visit the homes of the poor, before we belonged to the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul? No! Well, we shall not go any oftener, when once we have yielded to the temptation of renouncing the holy emulation of which the Society is the centre. The poor will lose a friendly protection; but we, still more unfortunate than the poor, shall have partly extinguished in our hearts that flame of charity, which Jesus Christ, who condescended to become a man, and passed on the earth doing good, had raised there both to enlighten and warm the world; that immortal flame, which, since the Saviour's mission, has suffered in the Church neither alteration nor eclipse, and under the influence of which have sprung up, during eighteen centuries, the magnificent works of catholic charity. So soon as that divine fire has ceased to consume our hearts, we must indeed fear lest selfishness, the love of vain pleasures, and the multitude of trifles that amuse human life, should again break into them. Let us then never forget that if we cease to serve the poor, we shall suffer the greatest loss; for Jesus Christ and his graces have always been, are at present and till the consummation of ages will be with deeds of mercy.

In thus expressimg, Sir and dear Brother, the grounds and reasons of the deep attachment we

should feel for our Society, my object has been to prevent the withdrawal of a few of our brothers, who might insensibly grow forgetful of our meetings.

To this day, I thank God for it, the Society has had to deplore but very few of those prolonged absences that resemble abandonment itself, and almost everywhere a multitude of new members have more than filled up the seats left vacant: but it is of importance to endeavour to render such painful lossess still more rare, and especially to resist a much more general tendency: I mean irregular attendance at our meetings.

Indeed it is only by assiduously attending those meetings that we can take an interest in the matters to which they are devoted. A member who merely calls in accidently is almost a stranger to the action of the Conference, and thus he too often prepares those indefinite absences which we lament.

But, if the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have duties with regard to the Conference to which they belong, these in their turn are bound by obligations which they can neither omit nor neglect to fulfil without endangering the very existence of the Society. I mean firstly the necessity of appointing a day and hour for the weekly meeting: secondly never to close any meeting without making the collection prescribed by the Rules.

In several Conferences, however, both these fundamental rules of our Society are totally overlooked.

It is enough that I have mentioned this double and serious omission to be assured that regular habits will, in those Conferences, take the place of that sort of carelessness incompatible with the attending on and relieving of our poor.

I know that such apathy is peculiar to Conferences which have most limited resources and very few members ; but a Conference should above all guard against abandoning itself. No assistance is to be had for, if it is the first to despair of divine Providence, and to exempt itself from the weekly collection.....

May I however be allowed, Sir and dear Brother, to point out to you a tendency the danger of which has been acknowledged in Paris and in important towns? I mean the eagerness with which workmen and the poor rush to those places with the hope of finding there work and help. God forbid indeed, it would ever occur to any of us to reject any kind of misery, because it comes from afar, and to confine, as it were, our charity within the narrow bounds of the towns in which we are living! No, the poor, wherever they may come from, are entitled to our pity, as soon as they are suffering. The poor are the living likeness of Jesus Christ and wherever we may find them, we ought to comfort and to welcome them. But if charity is universal and regardless of places and people, it has however to be prudent in order to be useful. Now, if we only speak of what happens every day before our eyes, how many poor do we not see who are only in distress since they are arrived in Paris! How many times, in our

visits, have we not listened to the story of those bitter delusions, which have taken the place of mad hope of fortune and happiness!

There is a workman; his day's earnings are small, but sufficient to let him live on, and bring up his children without any help; one day there is a vague and nearly always untrue or exaggerated rumour about a fellow workman, who has gone to Paris and is on the point of making his fortune. Directly our workman wants to set out and he really leaves his country. He is not sure to find work on arriving; he has no friends, no protectors; meanwhile the small savings, he has carried with him, are soon squandered away; little by little his furniture is put in pawn; then misery is at hand and still no hope of employment. Or perhaps it will be found only when he is disheartened, his resources are exhausted and his strength is weakened by suffering. Should illness come on and all the family is for ever sunk in the deepest distress and unable to get out by itself from that depth of misery into which it has imprudently flung itself. That is, Sir and dear Brother, what we are witnessing every day, and such a sight is still far more heartrending when, instead of healthy workmen, there come to Paris poor and already old men. It is rare indeed, that in their country and particularly in small places the poor may not be preserved at the last extremity from their anxiety by relatives or friends. No doubt they will often be helped only by their neighbours, who are themselves very poor; but at least it will be known that they are suffering from hunger,

from thirst, from the cold, that they have no bread for their children, no clothes to preserve them from the winter, and it will revive feelings of pity; charitable people will hear of it and, if there is no food, the first help will be supplied by charitable neighbours who will readily deprive themselves even of the most needful things. We shall not see then, as in our large cities, unfortunate people starving, without anybody being informed of it, without their finding any friend or any relative who may help them, without even, what is very strange but verified every day, their own neighbours knowing of their distress. For in the most populous towns, everybody is hidden and lost among the crowd; one lives without knowing each other, and if therefrom the most cautious may be disappointed about some unworthy poor, too often the most charitable are condemned to overlook true misery.

But with regard to moral and religious interests, we have much more to regret those imprudent changes. How many poor, indeed, how many workmen obeyed the laws of God and those of the Church in their countries or in their towns, and have forsaken that good practice, as soon as they have set foot in Paris. How many times have we not ascertained that the tribunal of penitence and the Holy Table have only been deserted after not a very long stay in this capital, where close to so many virtues, so many vices may also be found! Should we then wonder that, in the midst of the numberless allurements and the bad examples, the newcomers are compassed with,

their hereditary pratices give way first to indifference and then to unbelief? Should we also wonder that consequently the bonds of family grow loose, that disorder and debauchery take possession of those weakened souls and that after a degenerate race comes a race perhaps unhappier, but certainly more ignorant of the prescriptions of morality and of the divine law?

Also, Sir and dear Brother, I wish you to take a particular notice of it and, when you hear from your families that they intend to stay in one of those towns in which the poor fancy that all misery is relieved, we entreat you, in their interest, to let them consider the consequences of their scheme. A few are so lucky as to succeed, but most of them go to wreck and you may say truly that you can hardly find in Paris poor people who are born in Paris. On this point, if you wish to prevent your families from coming to a regrettable decision, it will be prudent to take the advice of the Conferences in the towns where those families intend to settle, in order to ascertain if there is plenty of work, if it is easy to find an employment, if, in a word, this change of residence is to be useful or prejudicial. The spirit of charity and brotherhood in all our Conferences makes us sure that our brothers will not yield to that too common feeling which prompts people to get the poor out of their way instead of helping them, and, at the same time, by their experience, they will spare their poor ruinous travelling expenses.....

Another abuse that, particularly in Paris, the

attention of the Conferences was drawn to, in consequence unhappily of too many complaints, has been the attempt of certain people to give themselves out as the representatives of our Society, either in order to make collections in private houses, or to get suscriptions to religious or literary publications. It has yet been settled amongst us, since the foundation of the Society, that, if we may resort to the charity of our relatives and of our friends, or if we may even try to commend to public charity the cases we are helping, however, in order to avoid dangerous mistakes, we should never call at the houses of the people whom we are not acquainted with. The only remedy to that evil is therefore to protest on all occasions against the much to be regretted facts we are alluding to and to avoid our giving pretext for such a prejudicial mistake. Therefore we think expedient to recall here the rule which has been adopted by many Conferences and according to which all recommendations and applications to strangers are in the only attributions of the President. For, whilst in this way it is more difficult for those people who are so kind as to prize a little our recommendations, to be imposed upon, it serves that other eminently useful purpose of preventing the Conference from binding itself and going too far, without the president considering the consequences of such a step. In a Society, as large as ours, that is spread in so many countries with the same name and the same custom, it is unnecessary to remark how prudent and judicious it becomes to take such precautions.

To close what concerns the poor, Sir and dear Brother, I have only to insist in a few words upon certain important precautions, that we can never neglect with impunity when we visit them. In the first place, we should always require of the poor persons whom we assist, that they should show their certificate of marriage either civil or religious, and the certificates of baptism of their children. Recent experience has convinced several of our Brothers that such caution is never useless, and the cases which they have witnessed have made them wish to have this observation mentioned here, since, in the course of a few months, and in the same Conference, it was found out that two couples, recommended by most worthy persons, and considered as honest and christian, had been legitimately united neither by the State, nor by the Church. It is no rare occurrence either to see in poor families, children of 3, 4 or 5 years old, or even adults, that have not received the sacrament of baptism. Let us therefore make it a rule, if not at our first visit, at least when we are sufficiently acquainted with the family, never to omit so necessary a precaution; our kind mode of speaking and gentle words, the wise discretion which charity will suggest, will always soften, even in the most delicate circumstances, what might seem painful in such an inquiry.

It is also proper, and this is the second point which I presume to recommend, to question the poor about their first communion, since it is but too true that many of them have never accomplished that imperative duty, and, therefore, live

in a distressing state of religious indifference. I need not enlarge on the subject, Sir and dear Brother, to make you understand how important it is to ascertain that capital point in our visits. It is however sometimes neglected; but then our confidence is often abused, and when afterwards we meet with men totally devoid of the first notions of religion, who know neither its dogmas nor its practices, nor its ceremonies, how can we move and reclaim them unless we are aware of their moral misery and ignorance? We speak to them of Jesus Christ when they hardly know they have a soul which has been redeemed by the blood of a God; several do not even remember the sacred and ever blessed name of the Saviour of men. We advise them to implore the forgiveness of their sins, by candidly confessing them to a priest; but they seem not to know that God has on earth ministers to comfort the righteous and open to the guilty the treasures of His mercy.

We must therefore use with them a language suited to their peculiar dispositions, and no good is possible so long as we have not impressed their souls with those fundamental truths which make a christian; the words of the Church are dead for them, and we must first of all recall to life those minds killed by scepticism and practical atheism.

Setting apart, Mr. President, our General-Report for the end of each year, a communication, which, from its nature and object must necessarily include many details, I shall venture to express a desire: it is that several times a year, you should

be so kind as to write to us, so as to let us know how your Conferences are getting on, and their good works progressing. The relations of all the points of France, and even Europe with Paris, have become so frequent and rapid, that without increasing our expenses or your own, you may from time to time avail yourself of the opportunities that offer almost every day, to inform us of the difficulties you encounter in the practice of charity, the solution of embarrassing cases, the increase which God is pleased to give to your works, and the consolations with which, even in this world, He rewards them.

If I propose this idea, Sir and dear Brother, it is not my intention to depart from the Spirit of our Society by introducing among us the habits of what is commonly termed *red tapeism,* in the world. I merely state how happy I should feel, if I could render our relations more frequent. I shall even say that by such means, alone, the President and Council-General can well know and appreciate the progress of our Society, its developments and tendencies; and certainly cases may occur in which it will be of use for the whole Society, that we be tolerably well informed of what concerns every one of the disseminated portions of our large and beloved family.

A true affection, for it is founded on the charity of Jesus Christ, binds the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul together; it binds to one another not only the members of the same Conference, but even those who, not living in the same city, are, according to appearances, never destined to con-

verse together, or even to see each other. That feeling is no imaginary and sterile affection; although no occasion may occur of manifesting it. But let a circumstance arise that brings together two members of the Society, as yet unknown to one another, and immediately the zeal and sincere affection that exists between them is revealed, not only by the cordiality of their language, but also by their courteous welcome, obliging proceedings and deeds that bear the mark of true benevolence. Suppose for instance that a young man who belongs to the Society should be sent to Paris to follow his studies; there is not one of us who will not consider it both a pleasure and a duty to receive him, introduce him to a Conference, give him the directions and advice which he may need for the selection of a residence, for his studies and modest amusement, in short to serve him in all things according to the dictates of prudence and discretion, the true guides of propriety. But shall we conclude from thence that whenever one of our Brothers leaves the province and comes to Paris, either for a lawsuit, a commercial speculation, or to solicit admission or advancement to some public office, the Conference to which he belongs ought to recommend him to one or several of these purposes, either to the Council-General, or to one of the Conferences in Paris, or even more especially to one of us in the Metropolis, *in his capacity as a member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.*

I do not think so, and in support of my opinion, it will suffice, Sir and dear Brother, to call your

attention to the many serious inconveniences that would infallibly result from the contrary mode of proceeding.

So soon as any personal services rendered to our colleagues from the provinces by those in Paris, *in the pursuit of some office,* would induce people to believe that, at least as an accessory to deeds of charity to the poor, one may find in our Society, means of *promoting one's own interests,* the Conferences would soon swarm with persons, who from interested views, would shed rather tardy tears on the wants of the poor, in order to gain for themselves in our Society, protection, support and means to break through the crowd and rise in the world.

The jealousy of disappointed rivals, added to malignity, ever on the watch in our days, to detect at least pretences for calumny, would soon denounce the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul as spreading over France, and all administrations, a vast system of intrigue, in order to monopolise all offices of honour and profit, and secure the success of some commercial speculation or other.....

Up to the present, we thank and bless God for it, the spirit of the Society has not been hurt by the rare demands that have been addressed to us from motives of personal interest; the abuse does not exist, but is was necessary to anticipate it. Let us then remain what we are; let us practise charity, and following the advice of Saint Vincent de Paul himself, *keep within the limits of that virtue.....*

Saint Vincent de Paul says somewhere that the

earthly paradise, like the heavenly one, is found in charity, and that among all good actions there is none sweeter than visiting the poor, provided that, in the presence of great sufferings, we try to look up to God, in order to take from the heart of our Lord a few words of consolation. He says elsewhere that he himself never felt more intimate joy, than when he was so happy as to serve the poor; and he once related that having asked a sister of charity, on her death-bed, if any thing pained her at that moment of struggle and anguish, he had received this answer: "*I reproach myself with taking too much pleasure in serving the poor.*"

Assuredly, Sir and dear Brother, we ought to respect the touching scruple felt by that saintly woman on the point of appearing before the supreme judge of men; but we, men of the world, who every day commit so many faults, should beg of God to reduce the anxieties of our conscience, at the time of the fearful passage, to the sole reproach of *having taken too much pleasure in serving the poor*, and that slight blemish, which will doubtless be forgiven us before we depart, will not prevent the poor whom we have assisted on the earth from coming, according to the promise of our holy Patron, *themselves to open us the gates of heaven.*

Believe me, etc.,

JULES GOSSIN.

Circular of the 2nd of july 1845.

Sir and dear Brother,—

I am happy to transmit to you several copies of the Brief by which His Holiness has deigned, on the 10th of January last, to grant to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul the most precious Indulgences. The Brief is translated, and we send at the same time an Instruction on Indulgences in general, and in particular on those which concern us. His Grace the Archbishop of Paris has been pleased to give his approbation to this work. It seemed useful to do so, because the doctrine of the Church on the matter of Indulgences is not always exactly understood; ant it was important that no serious doubt should arise about the conditions to the strict observance of which our Indulgences are attached.....

The Brief of the 10th January, 1845, Sir and dear Brother, is the principal and prominent fact of our history since the foundation of the Society. It is a title deed which we should hold doubly dear, both as christians and as members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

The most virtuous man sins seven times a day, according to the expression of Holy Scripture; the very practice of charity, in itself so meritorious, does not however exclude all occasion of transgressing. Self-love, vain glory and complacency are but too often mingled with the most pious

habits and the practice of the most holy actions. Temporal punishments are the unavoidable consequence of those various failings. Let us rejoice that the kindness of the Holy Father foreseeing the faults to which our frailty is exposed, has deigned to make us find in the works of mercy in which we share, sure means to free ourselves from the results of our daily errors.

I eagerly avail myself, Sir and dear Brother, of this general communication to all the Conferences, in order to call your attention to a few points of real importance, the first of which must excite all our solicitude, unless we wish to see manifested, sooner or later, in the Society a considerable deviation from the spirit that has presided over its first attempts, consolidated its progress and secured its development.

In several of the Conferences we notice a rather pronounced tendency to prefer the patronage of school-boys and apprentices to the fundamental work of visiting the poor in their homes. There are cities in which the indigent families see our Brothers only at distant intervals of time; in other places, the relations that existed between them, for the greater advantage of all, have almost entirely ceased.

Assuredly nothing can be more attractive than the care of childhood. The patronage of school-boys and apprentices deservedly occupies a considerable place among the works of the Society, and no expense seems too great to confirm and extend the practice of it; but we are convinced that it would be a grievous mistake to consider that

patronage, however excellent it may be, as an adequate substitute in any place, for the visiting of the poor at their homes.

Effectively it requires only very short reflection to be convinced that patronage alone is radically insufficient to occupy a Conference, and even that the other special works, whatever they may be, can bear all their fruits only if we visit the poor, while the work of visiting the poor may, absolutely speaking, supply the place of all special deeds.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul permanently appeals to the men of faith, who burning with the flame kindled in them by the miraculous alliance of divine charity with human weakness, feel the want of constantly doing good to their brethren, according to the precept and example of Jesus Christ. The devotedness of all, united in order to serve the poor and please God is the life and harmless force of our Society.

But that ardour for good requires employment; daily nourishment is necessary for it, and the mere patronage of children is then insufficient.

Unless they wish to seem troublesome to the masters in the schools, and to the foremen in the workshops by visits paid either too frequently or with too many persons, our Brothers particularly devoted to the care of the children must be few in number. What will then be, in the field of charity, the lot of our other friends, if the Conference gives to that work only all its time and resources?

And besides, children are amiable, and all are

happy to speak with them; but whether they be good and docile or turbulent and refractory, little is to be said of schools-boys in a weekly meeting. The account of the good marks awarded does not move an assembly (1).

But when the poor are visited, how much the Conference is moved by what is related, at every meeting, of a certain number of families that it has adopted! There is always something new and sometimes unforeseen among those who have been visited. The illness of an old man, the marriage of a couple at last reclaimed from disorderly life, the first communion of a child, clothing to be given to this one, sheets to be lent to that other, work to be procured for all, the recital of a good action or a kind word to some poor person, the sincere return of some to their religion, every detail possesses an interest and a charm, every thing provokes the communication of useful thoughts, brings on the expression of generous feelings; we cherish the poor more and more for the sake of God; we endeavour especially to love more that God of clemency, who has placed within our reach so easy and so sweet a method of expiating our daily errors; we like the Conference, we regret leaving it so soon, we resolve not to fail to attend the next meeting; we return home with contented hearts, and we are right : we have

1. Whilst recognizing the accuracy of the observation of Monsieur Gossin, we deem it right to remark that since 1845 the Work of the Patronage has much enlarged its field of action and that it requires a very much greater number of workers. — (Note of the Council-General 1888.)

done a little good, prayed to God, seen pious and christian friends : all that is happiness!

This is not a mere picture drawn from the imagination : it is the faint expression of the remembrance that I have preserved and shall always preserve of the Conferences to which I have belonged, and in which the visitation of the poor was, is still, and will always be made with diligence and with that charm which the works of God inspire hearts in union with Him. In all the Conferences in which the same things are done, the meetings, far from being tedious and monotonous, always pass too rapidly. Let those who doubt it at least try the experiment, and the same results are everywhere guaranteed.

And what especially makes the visiting of the poor eminently precious for us, is its being peculiarly, we might even say intimately, connected with the organisation and proceedings of our Society.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul being composed of ever changeable elements, and of men of all ages, nearly all very busy, no work of charity could suit it so well as that, to be and remain its fundamental work.

The apprenticeship to it is neither long nor difficult. In order to know how to assist the poor, it is merely enough to love them, and daily experience shows that here more than elsewhere it is the case to apply this profound saying : *Amor notitia est.* For, when we call on the poor with the words of faith on our lips, christian vigilance in our eyes and compassion in our hearts, we quite

easily understand the misery, the vices, faults, hopes and fears of those at whose hearth we have sat, and it does not require long lessons to find out the means of remedying so many evils. If such cares as these devolve upon those who undertake them, they do not however absorb all their time; they do not require a mathematical regularity that cannot be afforded by all. Provided we visit the poor, the day, the hour is of no consequence; and it is often even better that the visits should not be made at fixed intervals, lest those we relieve should thereby grow accustomed to them as to a right and a sort of income.

The other good works, on the contrary, and especially that of the patronage of apprentices, do not present those characters ; and, to speak only of the last, we shall call your attention, Sir and dear Brother, to the regularity and invariable assiduity which it requires. If we wish to have any influence over children, we must know and see them; and, in order to know and see them, we must be among them at fixed days and hours ; we must be able to dispose of our time beforehand, and at least for a whole season ; for you know as well as we that the success of patronage is a labour of perseverance and that without continuous endeavours it lingers and falls. But all cannot freely dispose of their time : we may even say that very few can do so : therefore it has been noticed that the Conferences which adopt exclusively that interesting but limited work, have much fewer members than those which, on the contrary, join it with the visitation of the poor.

Let us add that the visiting of the poor is the necessary complement of all special works, and that without it, none can be brought to perfection.

If you restrict your solicitude to collecting the papers necessary for the marriage of a couple, your good works will remain unfinished, for you have not done what you could to induce the parties to receive with due preparation the benefit of the nuptial blessing.

If you limit your charity to patronizing children in the schools or the workshops, without knowing their parents, without calling upon them and endeavouring to render them better, you are building upon sand. In vain will you try to inspire those children, out of their home, with the love of all virtues, if every evening, when they return to the family circle, they find there the example and encouragement of all vices. Of what use will it be to have taught them hymns in the day, if at night they go to sleep, or rather are waked up by the noise of swearing and blasphemy?

Visiting the poor offers, on the contrary, the immense advantage of making us thoroughly acquainted with all the members of the family. An assiduous and attentive visitor will soon know if the parents are married, if they have made their first communion, if the children are baptized and go to school; if there is union in the family; if its misery and diseases are the results of vice or undeserved misfortunes. Every thing speaks to our eyes and minds in that intercourse with the

poor. Yes, in those homes every thing has its signification, inanimate objects themselves and the very walls that are seen in one house adorned with external signs of religion, and in another exhibiting impious or immoral pictures. In two or three calls we ascertain whether the wife is cleanly and saving, the husband laborious, whether the children are educated and know their prayers.

Is it not plain that after such a complete study of the moral and material condition of a family, catholic charity will, with its genial breath, give birth to all the good works that are required to remedy the evils before its eyes ? It is because we see the poor, because we go to their homes, because we breathe the same air which they themselves breathe, that we think of visiting the sick in the hospitals or at their homes, of sanctifying the union of the parents, of taking care of the children, and in short of providing by all sorts of good works for their miseries that are renewed under so many various aspects.

We have now, Sir and dear Brother, only to answer an objection sometimes brought forward on this subjet.

New Conferences very often fancy that, if they undertook the visitation of the poor, they might seem to enter into competition with Associations already existing for that purpose, or with charitable Boards. To us those fears seem to be quite groundless. In fact when we see how little good can be done even by the most flourishing Conferences, and compare it with the alms distribu-

ted by hands more rich and powerful than ours, the only thought that can enter our souls, but without the least bitterness, is that of our inferiority. Most of the Conferences adopt, in general, no more than two or three families for each member; and how insignificant is such a proportion in a city that reckons any considerable number of poor persons! Indeed no one can consider us as the competitors of preexisting societies; to all we shall seem only desirous of gaining for ourselves the merits attached to visiting the poor, and anxious to accomplish a charitable duty. — Is it feared that our assistance may be given to persons who have received from other hands? But it is so slender that we need not be uneasy if sometimes our tickets reach those who have received, or are about to receive more abundant supplies from elsewhere.

Our share will then be always slight and unperceived; we must only learn to increase its merit by the perfection to which we try to bring it. It is not necessary for us to be mentioned as the public benefactors of the city. It is enough that coming at the eleventh hour of the day, we should not disdain the signal favour that our Supreme Master is pleased to show us, by admitting us among the labourers whom He sends to His vineyard...

You will forgive, Sir and dear Brother, the long developments into which I have suffered myself to be drawn. My justification or my excuse, at least, lies in the deep conviction I feel that the preservation of our dear Society is most closely

connected with the regular and assiduous visiting of the homes of the poor; and that, should the practice be discontinued, it would be the end of the progress, and especially of the spirit of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. It might still exist in name, but in reality it would have ceased to live.

I now come, Sir and dear Brother, to two recommendations of great interest, and directly connected with the principal object of this letter: I allude to the candidates for admission, and the young men who arrive in Paris, every year in November, to follow the course of their studies.

It is very desirable that the custom of associating with the Conferences young men under eighteen should extend and become general. The practice of charity is agreeable to man, even in his fallen condition: it is a necessity for him, when, before the dangerous time of youth, the participation in the most august of sacraments has kindled in his young heart a few sparks of the ardent fire with which Jesus Christ consumes and enriches the world.

It is high wisdom to appease that want, and implant charity deeply in that soul, before the stormy wind of passion has arisen in it. By early directing his thoughts, occupations and pleasures to works of mercy, we shall with charity, give that child on the verge of manhood a second guardian angel, if we may say so.

The young are almsgiving. Children going to school divide their bread and little provisions with the poor.

This saying of Job: *Mecum crevit misericordia, et de utero egressa est mecum* would find its daily application, were we to look attentively around us.

We therefore avail ourselves of his innate tendency, and delight a young man by early initiating him in the works of charity. After being an aspirant he becomes an active members; his zeal grows with his years. God and the poor habitually become the objects of his first and last thoughts of the day. Happy father and mother, fear nothing for the future prospects of such a son. The ardent season of youth will come, but the avenues that lead to the mind and heart of your child, are already, and have long been under a holy guard; the perils to be encountered will therefore be slight. His virtue may be tried, it will not be wrecked, if no interruption breaks off those highly preserving habits that have so worthily interested his first youth.

So, one of the good results on which our Society may congratulate itself, is the habit that the Conferences have of recommending to us those of their members who arrive in Paris, there to complete their studies. Indeed it is always a hard and painful trial for the faith of a young man, to be far from the support of his parents and friends, and to begin his career in a city where so many vices and temptations are to be found by the side of so many virtues and admirable examples. Experience teaches every day that, notwithstanding the sound principles of christian education, some may fall most deplorably, and that

of all preaching the most efficacious is good example. How happy then it is for a pious young man to take his place in our modest assemblies! to be immediately surrounded with brothers truly christian and devoted to the poor, and to enjoy the sweetness of that ready-made friendship that comes from catholic charity! Instead of seeking elsewhere his pleasures and relaxations, he will understand that one may be cheerfully virtuous in Paris, and that, after all, none are more worthy of love than the young men who fill our Conferences, and on whose brows may be admired that serenity, peace of conscience and gladness of heart whose indefinable union constitutes what an ancient called the *colour of virtue*. Therefore we gladly see this practice perpetuated, and we do most earnestly wish it to be developed, confirmed and extended more and more among us, in order that partly through the influence of our Society a greater number of pure souls should be preserved from the infection of vice. That happy end will be attained, if our young brothers, whose inexperience needs to be guided in this vast city, are careful to call upon us *at the very moment of their arrival in Paris*, and express the wish of being immediately introduced to our Conferences.

I have now, Sir and dear Brother, to close this long letter with my opinion and that of the Council on a subject the importance of which is every day pointed out by our correspondents.

From the beginning of our Society, it has always been the custom to close our meeting by a

collection; that collection has long been our principal resource, and we should wish it to continue essentially so. In fact, if it is often our office to carry alms that have been entrusted to us, we must, first of all and always, devote to the poor the offerings which our circumstances allow us to dispose of; we are volunteers under the charitable banner of Saint Vincent de Paul, and our company should always serve at its own expense. That offering, moreover, should always be secret, so that some of us, who have not received from God the gifts of fortune, should not have to blush of the smallness of their alms; while others, more favourably treated in that respect, might be tempted to pride themselves on having more largely contributed to the common work. These customs are essential, and serve in many respects to keep up in the Conferences the spirit of charity and sacrifice, the spirit of christian humility and equality. Therefore we have been sorry to hear that in one or two Conferences, those customs had undergone some alteration, that the collections were no longer seriously made, and in their place a fixed contribution was adopted. Certainly the poor must have been the losers by that arrangement, for nothing stimulates zeal more strongly than the weekly offering made every time after the miseries of the needy have been set out; and in such circumstances a voluntary sacrifice far exceeds the limited tax imposed beforehand. But, above all, the spirit of humility may thereby be seriously impaired; for it is principally to themselves that the Societies founded on catholic

charity should apply the saying of our divine Master : *Let not your left hand know the good done by your right.*

Thanks to God, union and cordiality prevail in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul ; its spirit is one of deep aversion to all that resembles dispute and contention, of abnegation of our own sentiment, and deference to those of our brothers. That spirit has made it live and prosper till now, and will secure its progress, if it will persevere in such principles. Let us then remain what we are, and remember that, if we were ever to depart, in that respect, from the traditions of our holy Patron, our Society would be immediately destroyed, its intimacy would vanish, our meetings would cease to be attractive, nor could we hope to find abroad a tranquillity that we have not known how to preserve at home.

"*Beloved brethren,*" said Saint Peter addressing the first christians, "*preserve among yourselves perfect union, compassionate kindness, brotherly love, indulgent charity accompanied by meekness and humility.*"

Let us not forget this touching advice, but follow it, and the grace, peace and life of Our Lord Jesus Christ will always be with us.

Believe me, etc.,

JULES GOSSIN.

Paris, may 31st, 1846, Feast of Pentecost.

Sir and dear Brother,—

Nearly one year has elapsed since the last circular which I had the honour of addressing to you, on the 2nd of July, 1845.

Since then, I have often wished again to address all the Conferences, and several of them kindly requested me to do so, complaining that I left too long an interval between two circulars. However I have thought it proper not to yield so soon. I have chosen to wait still longer, in order thoroughly to ascertain on what subject I ought more particularly to address some new communication. After mature reflection, it has seemed to me that, at a time when the Society reckons a great number of Conferences placed in countries independent of one another, that have neither the same language nor the same laws, manners or customs, whose sole tie of union is the standard of the catholic religion, and sole password *Charity*, it is right to insist first of all upon the necessity of keeping up the original spirit of our Society. Indeed, unity can subsist among so many disseminated branches of the same family on this condition only, that we shall constantly remember the object of our Society and the means used till now to preserve and extend it...

Being the last comers in the career of christian charity, in which we have been preceded nearly everywhere by civil or religious institutions of re-

mote origin, and being as to alms only able to distribute some essentially variable in their amount and always far inferior to the necessities of the poor; we candidly acknowledge that humility should be enjoined upon us as primarily appropriate to us, were it not besides, and in another regard the first of our duties. We should therefore show sincere respect for the charitable institutions which we find in existence around us, and avoid with them a rivalry, of which vanity, pride and self sufficiency alone might reap all the fruits. Let us be satisfied with the share allotted to us ; we shall not grieve if we seem to do little : but, then, let us seek our consolation in the desire to do as well as we can the little which circumstances allow us to undertake. We shall above all beware of the temptation of employing human means to call to ourselves the notice of the city and to provoke in our favour any public demonstration that would denote that we are held, or that we hold ourselves, in high esteem and great consideration. The seeking of these human means to secure the success of our works, is quite in opposition to the general counsels of christian wisdom...

It is moreover condemned by the maxims diametrically contrary, taught and practised by our holy Patron throughout his long career. Humility, courage and trust in God, such are the virtues whose union and happy concurrence should form, as it were, the ground and basis of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. But we have to enter into more details and say something about the inner life of the Conferences...

The Council-General has several times been asked whether the position of member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was an obstacle to the acceptance of certain duties either in other charitable institutions, or in the charity Boards.

The Council-General has always been of opinion that there could be no objection, should a member of our Society accept titles by which he might add to the good works peculiar to the Society other works not belonging to it, but no less meritorious, since they would always tend to the greater good of our fellow creatures and the greater glory of God. That opinion is easily justified. It has been said with truth that the life of a Catholic really deserving of that august name, associates itself naturally to the vast number of the proofs of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Considering the matter in that respect, it is quite desirable that a member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul should enter any legal charity Board. In the world (we must acknowledge it since it is a fact) very unfavourable prejudices are often entertained against men of real merit, solely because, as they openly follow religion, people are inclined to believe them unsociable. They are honoured with distant and cold esteem, but their Society is not desired, because it is supposed that being christians they must *of course be inconvenient.* Indeed, it is quite proper that those of our brothers who, notwithstanding prejudices, that are daily abating, may be appointed to some charity Board, should unhesitatingly accept the proferred honour.

It follows from our general rule and our cons-

tant custom that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has a lay character. It is with due knowledge that such a form has been given to it since its foundation and that the Sovereign Pontiff, Gregory XVI, has always sanctioned our work such as it has been constituted.

It is superfluous to explain here the peremptory reasons which, from the beginning, have determimined the establishment of that state of things. Those reasons will be obvious to all attentive minds. But while the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Society, a few Conferences, recently established, have thought they needed apologize, as it were, for having let in members of the Clergy. It was in that case from our brothers a mistake which their recent admission into the Society may excuse, but which it is important to set right immediately. The presence of a few members of the clergy in a lay Society does not change the character of that Society. If we go back to the source of the institutions of charity which, in all christian States, have honoured their country and comforted misfortune in all its forms, in all ages and in all conditions, we shall be obliged to own that those institutions have been founded by priests. And to-day as in the past centuries, it is right to proclaim that the poor *have been, are and will be always the children of the priests.* That is so true that it is proved by our language. It is said every day: we must send such a thing *to the poor of the parish priest,* or we must do this thing *for the poor of the parish priest.* It is consequently an allowed thing that *parish priests have their poor.* And that

seems so natural that it would be nearly a scandal *if they have not their poor.*

Such are the facts we are noticing and all that speaks highly and unceasingly in praise of the catholic priests, to whom public conscience assigns and acknowledges a *perpetual family*, because it is incessantly renewed from all the most infortunate people in the parish. And those men who by their calling and their feelings, have devoted their life to the relief of all miseries, should have not found even in one Conference the thankful welcome which is due to their charitable cooperation! Such has never been the meaning of the prescriptions of the rules and such is not the opinion of the Council-General that is entitled to interpret them.

But we have been repeatedly asked at different times what is the proper behaviour towards the Clergymen, who condescend to honour our meetings with their attendance.

The Council-General has deemed that the title of honorary member does not sufficiently express the respectful gratitude of a Conference towards the Clergymen, who would condescend to visit it at more or less distant intervals, or even to share in its labours. The much more dignified title of *member of honour* has alone seemed significant enough fully to express the relations of kindly condescendence of the clergy and grateful veneration on our part. To invite them to sit among the officers of the Conference, and in a distinguished place, if possible; to submit the order of the day to their approbation; to ask of them a few

words of edification and encouragement ; to beg them especially not to withhold from us their advice and counsels; to listen with filial gratitude to their paternal exhortations; all these, and other things of the same kind are in perfect accordance with the lay character that is the essence of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. We need not say that, as the Bishops are *by right* the chiefs and fathers of all the institutions founded on Catholic charity, to them alone belongs that presidency, when they sometimes deign to assist at a meeting. On those grave and solemn occasions, a Prince of the Church, when he enters a Conference, cannot descend to become one of us. If he comes down to our level, and holds out his hand to us, it is to do us the honour of raising us for a moment up to himself, and never really to become one of us. In many cities, the clergymen who are members of our Conferences, like to mingle with our ranks, and refuse to take a seat at the board ; we should not, through our respect to those venerable men, become troublesome to them, which might happen if, persisting to oppose their modesty, we wanted them to *ascend higher*. However we think it proper not to yield too easily, or without being as it were compelled to it by such a desire manifested by the head of a parish, or some priest occupying an eminent station. The natural place of a grand vicar or Parish priest is always by right marked in the *first rank* at any assembly over which rises the august sign of the Redemption. When that order, so proper *that it may be called necessary*, is changed, every one

must in consequence feel uncomfortable. It is useless for the clergyman whose person and character we wished to honour, to try to disappear and get lost in the crowd ; all eyes seek him, till, in spite of his humility, he at length allows us to observe the rules of propriety with respect to him.

That last observation and the preceding advice are not however destined to lessen the right which the president has to manage the business of the meetings ; that right remains unaltered, save on the quite exceptional case of the presence of a bishop. The share of the presidence between two persons is really all nonsense and on the other hand the preservation of the spirit and of the custom of our Society requires that the character of our Conferences be kept untouched. But that character would lose its actual evidence, if, in the practice, that chief point might be altered or modified.

God is our witness that all that we have just said, does not come from the suggestions of a vain and miserable pride.

On the contrary, charity alone makes us insist upon it. Since its foundation up to the present day, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, such as it is and such as our Holy Father the Pope has blessed it and has wished it to remain constituted, has had the daily made manifest gift of drawing on youth, of pleasing and improving it. Would it be prudent and wise to use pruning-knife on a tree that bears fine fruit, in the hope, at least uncertain, of making it produce better one ? Only wild stock can be grafted. The gardener uses to

respect and keep up the young wall trees, the fruit of which he is gathering every year.

Besides for all that concerns the relations of deference, there is an infallible rule which is implied in true humility, founded on the consciousness of our nothingness. If that feeling is united in our souls to a very high esteem and a deep respect for sacerdotal character and above all with a sincere love for the priest by whom the mission of Jesus Christ is continued among us, it is and it will always be impossible for us to say or to do anything which may grieve our masters and our guides in the way of salvation.

Next to the strict observance of our rules and customs, nothing is more important than the choice of the President of the Conference. Long experience has shown that *what the President is, the Conference is also.* Saint Vincent de Paul sometimes said, that, if he were compelled to choose, for the success of an enterprise, between fifty stags headed by a lion, and fifty lions headed by a stag, he would feel more secure with the former than with the latter. That saying of a man who, in his lifetime, deservedly enjoyed the reputation of consummate prudence, is a valuable lesson. In addition to the principal qualities that the President should possess to be, like all his brethren, a worthy member of Saint Vincent de Paul, he must besides surpass all others by the deepest attachment to the Society, by a happy blending of mildness and firmness, by inexhaustible patience, and last of all by his ardent zeal for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the poor. It is not necessary

for a President to be distinguished by brilliant qualities of mind, or even to be endowed with great fluency of speech. A President is sufficiently eloquent when he commands the attention of his hearers; and that will never fail him, if, by the soundness of his judgment, he immediately points out the reasonable things he has heard; if he quickly understands difficults cases, solves them without hesitating too long, and with mild but inflexible persistency maintains what has been resolved. An upright mind is a sure warrant of success for a President. With that he will always know how to confine himself within proper limit. When exposing to his brothers the necessities of the poor, he will feel what details ought to interest them and can reach their hearts; he will not carelessly wander from the subject; he will avoid dryness; he will not frown at the slightest sally of a younger brother, but nevertheless he will not allow all eccentricities. A President's office is always laborious; it constitutes a real, and often very heavy burden.

We doubtless all enjoy the happiness of being Christians by conviction, by heart and by practice; but nevertheless we are *men*. As such, our faults are so great, our virtues so trifling, and our humility so little, that it is not always easy in an assembly to prevent or to stop the accidental outburst of a member, who is however excellent and deservedly respected for his piety. A man worthy of respect and actuated by the purest intentions, may, sometimes, through want of judiciousness, not perceive the unsoundness of certain of his

propositions. A profound thinker has said : *We never do wrong more completely nor with a more contented heart than when we do it from a false principle of conscience.* Thence, comes that longing to speak, at every turn, of subjects foreign to the Conference ; thence arise those contests of words of which it is very difficult to provide that some strokes will not end by wounding even charity itself. It is on such occasions and others of the same kind, that the duty of the President often becomes laborious. That he should bear mildly the first deviations from order is easily understood ; but he must not let them increase, or above all recur. With due respect for the valuable qualities of a brother often full of zeal and candour, he must resist any efforts that might be tried to convert the friendly conversation of our Conference into angry debates and personal quarrels.

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This ancient motto of the Christians : *Cor unum et anima una*, invites me to say a few words on a subject yet untouched, and however of great importance. In the primitive Church, the faithful always commended themselves to the prayers of one another : their letters began and ended with formulas that had become usual and were never omitted. Even in the time of Saint Vincent de Paul, as all his letters show, business was entered upon only after wishing one's correspondent for ever *the love, grace and peace of Jesus Christ.* In our days, those formulas have disappeared, and are hardly used but in the letters of persons

engaged in monastic life. Yet the feeling, which had inspired those greatings equally touching in their sense and their form, still lives in our hearts, and nothing is more common in christian families than a mutual demand not to forget one another at prayer-time. Such demands are never rejected, though we frequently blush when they are addressed to us, for we know how little able we are to invoke God with efficacy for others, when we are so slow to pray for ourselves. But are those express or tacit promises of prayers ever kept? Alas! no: we must candidly confess that in most cases we forget them. However, such reciprocity of kind services before God would be a new tie between us, and moreover a truly valuable advantage for every one. We see, from the correspondence of nearly all the Conferences, that our brothers frequently commend themselves to the prayers of the Council-General, and to those of the Council of Paris. In cases of death, illness and a few particular necessities, individual requests are sent to the same purpose; but we receive collective entreaties whenever a Conference undertakes a new work, when it wishes to draw the blessings of Heaven upon the instruction it gives or causes to be given to youths or children, when it hopes for some favourable event or wishes to avert a misfortune. On those and similar occasions, prayers are asked of us. And we too, the elder brothers of the family, should have many reasons to solicit the prayers of our brothers, divided from us not by feeling but by distance. In order to answer the pious feeling which

multiplies such solicitations, and makes us feel the necessity of being ourselves constantly recommended to God, we have thought useful to make known to you the imitation of a prayer already ancient, that a holy prelate had composed for his own use and that of his friends. This prayer, appropriated to the wants of our Society, to those of our poor, approved by ecclesiastical authority, and adopted by several of our brothers in Paris, has seemed to us suited to the desired object. I enclose a few copies of it. It must be understood that the recitation of that prayer is obligatory upon no one, and the omission of it will be no fault; all that we wish is to supply a real want and thus satisfy the piety of many of our brothers. However, if we feel inclined and if the prayer touches us, each of us may copy it for himself, and say it fervently every day, either at church or in his usual devotions, or at any other time; and then we may go to sleep with the sweet and consoling thought, that in all the parts of the world there is not one of our Conferences, not one of their good works, not one of our brothers for whom we have not invoked Heaven.

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Believe me, etc.,

JULES GOSSIN.

Paris, november 1st 1847,
All Saints' Day.

Sirs and dear Brothers,—

The Council-General, to which I had the honour of announcing, as early as last April, that my health would soon compel me to resign the title and office of President of the Society, has now received my formal resignation. Before my successor is chosen, I yield to the desire of the Council and to my own inclination, by not denying myself the pleasure of conversing once more with you.

A sort of solemnity seems to belong to a voice that is no more to be heard. The words of a dying man, those of a father who undertakes a voyage from which he does not hope to return, even those of a brother about to leave for an indefinite term, have then unaccustomed weight, as if those words, that are not to be repeated, ought ever to be present in the ears, minds and hearts of all the members of the family.

Far from rejecting that accidental claim to more complete attention, Sirs and dear Brothers, I dare on the contrary avail myself of it, in order that my effusions may bear all the fruits we should expect for the preservation of the spirit of our Society, the confirmation of its usages, and the consecration, if we may say so, of the maxims which, after constituting its force up to this day, will secure its duration. For the sake of brevity and

concision, I shall neglect transitions, and often merely state certain remarks that are, for the Council-General and myself, positive truths confirmed by observation and experience.

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in general.— The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, viewed in its true light, is one of the means employed by divine Providence, as well to give the poor assistance both spiritual and temporal, as to revive *in all places and times* the spirit of religion and harmony. The latter end the Society endeavours to attain, by opposing human respect, and dispelling between men of faith and virtue prejudices, and antipathies of all kinds, especially those that arise from politics, in order to make them one and the same family, marching together to the conquest of heaven by good works, under the double banner of the cross and Catholic charity.

A Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul is everywhere a benefit to the public.

It is a benefit for the poor, but a still greater one for those who, without being distressed by poverty, were, formerly and before joining our ranks, a prey to many other miseries, such as loneliness, idleness, human respect, a surfeit of all false pleasures and even the loathing of life.

Wherever the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul exists, the true catholics, friends of the poor, may meet on a ground of sacred neutrality, *that of charity*. They are then recalled to the only true happiness of this world, the daily practice of what is right, *with a view to an eternal reward;* and, by constantly and altogether aiming at the same ob-

ject, they may show themselves as believers, followers of religion and charitable men, without being, for any of those reasons, accused of singularity.

The first qualification therefore that a candidate should possess, when he wishes to enter a Conference, is an eager desire for the prosperity of the Society, certainly not out of pride, but from a feeling of deep gratitude to God who has raised up in our time this means, till then unknown or not in use, of assisting the poor, and at the same time improving those who visit them.

To unite our slender alms in favour of the poor, so that the number of the offerings should make up for the smallness of each of them; to unite our hearts, prayers and works in order to encourage each other in the path of virtue by the powerful influence of good example, such are in a word the whole secret and the whole spirit of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

We should never separate those two ends. *They are essentially connected in the Society and cannot bear to be detached from one another.* To do good *separately* is to practice almsgiving, but that is not the work of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. To form a connection with persons worthy of esteem in every respect, but who do not intend to make their mutual relations serve as the foundation of a Society of good works, *that are to be discussed and performed together and at a common expense :* that is doubtless doing a thing good in itself : but it is not forming that alliance of a quite peculiar nature, of which any member that has

been some time in the Society does so fully appreciate the usefulness, know the charm, and so cheerfully adopt the usages.

The copper, silver and gold offered by each, according to his circumstances, and mixed in the common purse, support the treasure ever exhausted and ever renewed with which we assist the poor. For the word *mixing* substitute *allying,* which expresses both intelligence and will, and you will have a slight image of the cordial concert and blending of our brothers to perform charitable deeds together, whatever differences may besides exist between their wordly circumstances, education and fortune.

The Conferences whose members should exclusively attend to the care of the poor, without attempting to create and foster among themselves any relations of kindness and affection, would therefore lose sight of one of their essential objects ; and, on the other side, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul could not recognize itself in an assembly, however honourable its elements, if it did not meet for the relief of the temporal and spiritual miseries of the poor, by means of free and secret alms, collected at the same time, joined together, and to be used by each visitor according to the greater or less number of families under his charge.

Such are the infallible signs to which the Conferences may refer, in order to judge if they have really kept, to this day, within the essential spirit and fundamental usages of the Society.

The Society trusts in the often experienced pro-

tection of Providence. It does not hoard up money; it gives according to its means; it likes to turn everything to account; it renews what is old; it finds some use for what seems to be past using. It does not sweep the crumbs away, but saves them: were it to relieve only a child with those crumbs, they would be precious to it.

The proper character of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, is not to seek solutions for several great problems, which relate to the very existence of social order, and do, in our days, occupy the most eminent minds; its office is the practice of charity, which is very far from excluding the research of the material and moral means of rendering the condition of the poor more tolerable: How many ingenious things have already been invented by our brothers! The Holy Family, the Saving Bank, the Rent Fund, the books lent out, the patronage of apprentices and school-boys, etc., etc.

Notwithstanding all the pledges that seem to secure its duration, the Society seems however to be exposed to two perils that threaten its existence:

It may be feared that, instead of continuing to be a Society essentially religious and exclusively catholic, it should, in the future, dwindle into a vast Charity-Board, restricting its solicitude to the dealing out of material relief.

It may also be feared that the uniformity of our meetings should produce monotony, weariness, and at last cause the Conferences to be deserted.

To guard the Society from the former peril, we have two infallible means :

The first is to introduce into the Society none but catholics capable of edifying their brothers ; that is who, far from allowing religion no other homage than that of cold respect, conform their lives to all the precepts of Jesus Christ and His Church ; the second is to love, to the very bottom of our hearts, our fathers and masters in faith, I mean the Episcopacy and the clergy.

For that I refer you to the Circular of the 30th of May, 1846. As for the latter peril, the only means of avoiding it is never to leave off the daily and assiduous practice of visiting the poor in their homes.

Any Conference that faithfully adheres to that first of our practices will know neither monotony nor weariness.

All those Conferences which neglect it, or follow it but imperfectly, will die of consumption. Wherefore ? Because it is natural that individuals, in the presence of one another, should grow weary and tired of each other ; external causes, such as the frequent account of the wants of poor families, and the measures to be resorted to, are required to give life, interest and animation to our meetings.....

In the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, there is little inclination, to write, and hardly none to read. For what concerns the first point, the Council-General scarcely hears once a year from many Conferences, which however would have things of interest to communicate. As for the second,

the members deprive [themselves of useful and even necessary instructions relative to the organization of the Society, and thus are acquainted neither with the solutions of certain questions, nor with the history and works of the other Conferences.

It is desirable that the various publications, in which the history and progress of the Society are faithfully related, should become familiar to every member.

Conferences. — Most of the Conferences, thanks to God, are free both from sadness and constraint. On the contrary, cheerfulness is not excluded from among them, where gentle and amicable cordiality generally prevails.

But a few Conferences are mentioned, into which that disposition is not admitted, and where constraint, coldness and sometimes even weariness prevail.

No Conference, however, has offended against propriety or charity, because laughter has been allowed among its members. Sometimes even laughter is excellent : it revives attention, prevents sleep, excites cordiality and appeases too violent discussions. It is the best sign of that spirit of decent freedom that should rule among us, and which acts at the same time as a tie, a pleasure and a most potent charm.

The Conferences that afford the most plentiful relief to the poor, are those in which charity is practised cheerfully.....

It would no doubt be improper to go to a Conference in hopes of finding or provoking occasions of

hilarity. We must, on the contrary, consider attendance at the Conference as *a serious duty*. But it is no contradiction to consider a Charitable Society *quite seriously*, and at the same time to yield to the free and communicative gaiety that pervades it at certain times.

In France, what even the best men fear most, is weariness ; and, in that respect, the men of every country are all *more or less French.*

Weariness is to a Conference what smoke is to a bee-hive.

When it happens that a swarm of bees does not thrive, it is not because the bees get tired of work, it is because they are too much disturbed by lookers on, who want to find out, at any cost, the secret of their honey and their wax, as well as what concerns the internal administration of their little harmless community.

The same thing happens to the Conferences of our Society, when the public choose to bestow upon them too much attention.

Assuredly, we may be quite worthy of esteem,—charitable, christian, fervent and laborious, without belonging to our Society : but, when a young man who possessed those qualities has been admitted into our Conferences and has afterwards deserted them, his prolonged absence is a most sad indication. Hasten then, zealous Presidents, to give up every other affair, and go and visit those young brothers : they are in danger : the clock that kept time with such regularity is surely out of order. Examine well ; ask questions with the gentle solicitude that belongs to a father's heart ;

you may perhaps prevent a great fall, or arrive still in time to redeem it. In the moral as in the material world, some things attract and some things repel each other mutually: those symptoms cannot deceive. When therefore charity that attracted repels, *it must be that the soul which loved God and the poor has taken to some other love.*

In the Conferences where there are many young men newly arrived from the provinces, it would be well that the President should choose two or three members to enter into immediate relation with our young brothers, and give them desirable information on many things which it is important they should know. Thus, they would be saved from isolation, and helped to find some young men in whom they will meet with that friendship *prepared beforehand*, and if I may say so, *ready-made*, which is one of the means intended by Providence to become the comfort of their studious hours, the joy of their leisure time and the support of their steps, perhaps yet insecure in the path of virtue. Nothing more than shyness causes us to live apart from the rest, and young men are nearly all timid. That should never be forgotten.

Large trees often spring from a fruit that a bird has dropped. The presence of a single, but zealous, member is sometimes enough to raise in a city a religious institution, charitable, social and therefore eminently useful.

Whenever one of our brothers leaves his Conference to settle in a town of some importance where the Society is unknown, it would be well that he

should, when once settled, inform his new parish priest that a member of our Society is there, waiting till it pleases Providence to send him a brother. Should one or two new comers likewise give notice to the same Pastor, a new Conference is soon formed in a city which, but for so simple a means of recognition between brothers, would long have remained unacquainted with the Society.

Such the President, such also the Conference.

We do not always know whom we ought to choose as members of the Board; but we can at least know infallibly what candidates we ought not to choose: it is those who evince eagerness to be called to office.

A Conference falls to the lowest rank when, as is unfortunately not unexampled, any systematic opposition is formed against the President's authority.

Then, the members of the Conference cease to edify one another; on the contrary they become a mutual cause of scandal; — then, the cares of petty vanity absorb the time destined to speak of the necessities of the poor and to provide for them. Both sides depart with dry and wounded feelings. Then indeed, let us repeat it, the Conference is really no more; how, indeed, could Saint Vincent de Paul recognize his children in an assembly from which his banner, that of charity, has long ago disappeared?

Visits to the poor.— When we leave off visiting the poor, we forget them, and with them charity.

When we often visit the poor, we prefer the poor

to all the rest, and to ourselves. When we are long without seeing them, we prefer anything to the poor.

That member of Saint Vincent de Paul who considers himself only as a bearer of bread to a poor family, understands neither charity, nor the Society, nor the poor. The Society has never been, and never will be, an association of porters.

Sending bread-tickets through a servant is keeping back, to the detriment of the poor, the better part of the alms due to them, I mean what a good word from the heart would have added to that bread.

What moves a poor man to the very bottom of his heart, is to see that you think of him, look after him and love him; it is to feel that the visitor gives himself or at least *lends himself to him* once a weeek.

Charity is efficient only when complete, and it is complete only when it is *true*.

All the faculties of a truly charitable man concur in the act of almsgiving. When the hands have made their offering, comes the turn of the other limbs, etc. The mouth ministers words of comfort and hope; the feet become those of the lame man, and the arms those of the paralytic... But of all the consolations which we can afford the poor, the greatest and most rare is that given by our ear, when we listen to them.

Meekness and patience in our relations with the poor are the first virtues we should endeavour to acquire. Without them, there is no charity. That we should not always be able to give, a poor man

conceives and excuses ; but that we should address him harshly, he can neither bear, forget nor forgive. We may sometimes happen to assume a loud tone, when excited by the very interest we bear to a poor person, or to scold him for doing something wrong or foolish. This is always wrong. The poor man is offended, and the salutary influence we might hope to have over him, is then lost or much endangered.

It has been said and still is proved by daily experience, that sending poor families to Paris, solely from the hope that there they will obtain employment and resources more easily than elsewhere, is merely bringing the greatest calamity upon them, — an evil almost without any remedy.

For the little we give to the poor, how many elements of happiness the poor send us in return ! Whole volumes might be written on that subject.

How many hours are lost in life ! How happy the poor would be if we thought of disposing of those in their favour, by a few supererogatory visits ! There are many families, especially in large towns, which are relieved only by our brothers, known only by them, and living in absolute isolation. How eager therefore is its expectation, in the garret where it dwells, after the usual weekly visit ! They dare not go out lest they should lose it ; if a step is heard on the stairs, as narrow and steep as a ladder, that lead to those abodes of misery, their hearts beat with hope. If that hope is deceived, *well,* they say sadly, *it will then be for to morrow.*

A spirit of order and foresight is seldom found among the poor. Yet, in whatever destitution a family may be, it would be possible, by intelligence, perseverance and industry, to render its situation less painful. That is principally the visitor's office; he must give to the poor his judgment, meditations and experience. As he is the eye of the blind man and the foot of the lame, he must be the reason of the fool and the steward of the prodigal; for some poor are prodigal. How truly does apply the profound saying of David : *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.*

Of all the works of the Society, that which does most deeply move the hearts of the poor, is the one called the Work of the Holy Family, and the object of which is to bring together, before the altars, the visited and visitors, worshipping the same mysteries, hearing the same instructions and praying for each other. Everywhere, except in churches, the different ranks have their places assigned to them. Here, the poor and the rich are mingled, praying for one another. No work, we say it again, pleases the poor more, none raises them more in their own eyes, none produces more abundant and endurable fruits of salvation. That work is really one of *progress* and of the best kind of progress.

Great pain is inseparably connected with our visiting the homes of the poor ; I mean the difficulty of establishing any proportion, however distant, between the wants and the assistance. One means however is suggested of diminishing that pain :

settle on your poor families at least a portion of your superfluous expenses.

Certain habits indifferent in themselves, but which at last became very expensive, have gradually been introduced among nearly all modern nations, and the young men have adopted them with all the ardour of their age. I here allude to the pipe, cigar and snuff-box. Convinced that those habits, *if they could at least be progressively reduced to moderate use,* would afford the means of supporting many families, our Society would rejoice, if the courageous reform of what is *exaggerated* in those habits were to change into bread, even a part of the daily and ruinous tribute which several of us pay to those tastes.

We often lament the inconveniences arising from those habits : all resolves of moderation yield to their force considered as irresistible, especially when they have long prevailed. Well, let us resolve to buy bread every day with what we save on those expenses equally sterile and tyrannical, and soon we shall be both suprised and delighted at enjoying better health, and having supported some poor person.

Such are, Sirs and dear Brothers, the last counsels which I beg leave to commit to your meditations, before I resume among you the place which I occupied in 1844. The Council-General has deemed that, although these things were not new, it was highly profitable to remind you of them, even with a sort of earnestness and solemnity, because they constitute in reality the fundamental and primitive spirit of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

One word more, and I have done.

During the years that I have had the honour of being at your head, I have been in direct relation with a great number of our brothers, and I have reason to fear that I have often edified them very little. I can therefore do nothing better, when taking leave of you, than to use the remarkable words addressed to his flock by a Bishop of the Primitive Church, on the anniversary day of his promotion :

"I am too far from vain confidence in myself to presume to say that I have offended none in the discharge of my office. If therefore, in the various affairs and anxieties with which I have been overwhelmed, I have chanced not to listen to one of you as he wished ; if I have looked upon one of you more severely than I ought, or addressed him some word louder than was necessary ; if I have hurt by some improper answer the afflicted or those in humble circumstances ; if, either perchance or absorbed in thought, I have neglected the prayer of some poor man, or put him off till another time, or repelled him with a haughty gesture ; if I have shown too great vivacity in clearing myself of an unjust suspicion ; if one of you, in his conscience, could doubt my feelings towards him : all of you to whom I am answerable for these offences, forgive me that you may be forgiven !"

Believe me, etc.

Jules Gossin.

Paris, april 14th 1848, festival of the Compassion of the Blessed Virgin.

Sir and dear Brother—,

The short letter I addressed to you on the 1st of March last had but one object, wich was to let you know, that the election which it was the duty of the General Council to make, was terminated. The briefness of that communication found its excuse in the serious duties which the circumstances then imposed upon us ; but it placed me under the pleasing necessity of again addressing you after a short interval, and of treating with all the Conferences of the interest and prospects of our beloved Society. That duty I now come to fulfil, and it is for me a real pleasure, since it affords an occasion of drawing closer together the ties of affection betwen us, and familiarly communicating views and thoughts in which it is so important that we should agree, in order to keep up our common spirit.

My first thought, indeed my first duty, Sir and dear Brother, is here to express, in the name of the whole Society, the deep regret caused by Mr. Gossin's resignation. Praising each other is, doubtless, averse to the spirit of our Society ; but there are services which cannot be passed over in silence without indifference, or be left unnoticed without ingratitude. All those who have been so happy as to approach our worthy Brother, and witness his devotedness to our works, know the cha-

rity of his language, as well as of his deeds; they know to what extent mildness in him was allied with firmness, how prudence tempered the impulses of zeal, without ever discouraging it; and those who did not enjoy that happiness, know however, through the paternal communications that moved our general meetings so deeply, through the admirable circulars which he has written, how much he possessed the spirit, and appreciated the wants of our Association, which he had joined only in his mature age, but to which, according to his own expression, he had vowed all the affection of youth. In his hands, long and difficult affairs melted away, as it were, like snow before the sun. In his presence, differences of opinion vanished of their own accord, and minds that were opposed united in a filial feeling of respect and confidence. Therefore, no important work was undertaken without his concurrence and the counsels of his experience; and it is to his will, both energetic and persevering, that we owe a multitude of institutions, which have already borne happy fruits and will bear still more in the future. To his zeal, never discouraged by difficulties, we owe the *Manual*, that charitable code of our traditions; to his piety, *the Prayer for the use of the members of the Society*. Last of all, to his unshaken trust in God, we are indebted for that collection in favour of Ireland, which began with a mite, with the thirty sous of a paralytic to end with 154.000 francs; and which, in a year of dearth as that when it was undertaken, will be one of the noblest titles of glory of our Society.

We still remember when he received from the President of the Council of Ireland, the lamented Mr. O'Caroll, those heartrending letters that were communicated to the Society; and, notwithstanding objections the best grounded in appearance, notwithstanding the recent collection in behalf of the sufferers from the overflow of the Loire, notwithstanding the misery that desolated France, in spite of so many motives, that, in a human point of view, were to render the attempt abortive, he resolutely made up his mind, and carried with him all his Brothers who trusted in his wisdom, but were amazed at his pious temerity. The memory of it will always live in our hearts, and the whole Society will preserve undying gratefulness for the eminent work with which he has endowed it.

But, though it has pleased Providence, Sir and dear Brother, to allow that well beloved father to return to a repose rendered necessary by the fatigues of charity, that painful event has not abated our trust, at the same time that it afflicted our hearts. *Christian deeds*, as our Rules say, *belong to God alone, the author of all good,* and the weakness of the tool, does not prevent the Divine hand which handles it from being able and strong. If then, God chooses to maintain and extend our charitable colonies, he will know how to find new ways, and thus show more evidently to all eyes His all-powerful mercy. As for myself, that is my unshaken hope, and I sincerely believe we all share it unreservedly. That hope makes me to-day address you...

Different times, Sir and dear Brother, bring peculiar duties with them, and command virtues that are not exclusive, far from it, but that bear a more special character of imperious necessity. To recognise that fundamental model, by which we must, before all, regulate our conduct : to know our duty well, in order to do it well, are among the most real wants of charitable societies, as well as of individuals ; and, in days of difficulty like the present, that calm, conscientious and thorough investigation, is for us a most pressing necessity and a most serious obligation. In this investigation I ask you to co-operate with me, in the name of our beloved Society : for that purpose I take the liberty to offer the results of my slight experience and that of the Council-General, begging you will grant us yours in return.

If we consider attentively the situation of Charitable Societies in general, and particularly of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, we shall easily see that three fundamental virtues are required of them, more strictly than ever in these days : charity to the poor, union or confraternity between their members, and christian prudence. These are the three principal links that give the chain its solidity, and allow it to be stretched without losing any of its strength.

First, charity to the poor ! That is the first of our duties, as well as the sweetest of our satisfactions, the condition and reason of our existence, the aliment of our zeal, the justification of our whole life ! *principium et finis, alpha et omega !* Through it we received life fifteen years ago,

through it we shall continue to grow and prosper ; so long as it lives among us, so long as it animates our steps, undertakings and endeavours, obstacles will fall of themselves ; and if, in ordinary times, it is our vital element, how much more ought it not to be so in our days ? In fact, all invites us to be doubly tender to the poor : their interest, our own, and that of our country !

Everything does, therefore, make it our duty more than ever to devote ourselves to the service of the poor, and not to desert our Conferences for other meetings assuredly useful, but in which that great and vital interest is not so thoroughly engaged. To observe such punctuality may demand greater efforts and sacrifices ; but the gratitude of the families we relieve will be our reward. We may not always have in our hands the same material ressources to distribute ; but we shall always have the same heart, affection and tenderness, or rather our heart will be more compassionate, our affection more lively, our tenderness more attentive ; and whosoever has lived long among our families, will not doubt that, for many, the insignificance of our gifts will be more than supplied by that increase of love and benevolence. Let us therefore trust and persevere ! Trust, not in ourselves but in God ; persevere, because, if God never forsakes those who rely upon him, it is on condition they will assist themselves and not shrink from sacrifice.

Charity, Sir and dear Brother, is therefore the first virtue under whose shade we must seek shelter, charity in action, heart and words ; charity to

one and all; a charity patient and tolerant, that does not pretend to dictate but relies on time and reason to make its advice accepted; a charity indefatigable which no obstacles can discourage: a charity humble, that does not blush at the smallness of assistance; a charity catholic, in short, a charity taken from the doctrines, the Gospel and the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. But to that fundamental duty others are added, amongst which the duty of confraternity, the duty of prudence.

The duty of confraternity, we doubtless have all long felt and practised; for what, from the very origin, has made the harmless strength and vitality of our Conferences, is the genuine cordiality that has always prevailed among their members, the simplicity of their meetings, the effusions of friendship, and what I might here presume to term the pious fellowship of charity. This is what has filled our Conferences, and called to them at the same time as young men, others of greater maturity and more settled position in life; what has brought together, side by side, persons of the most various situations, opinions and fortunes; what has made them at last overcome the weakness of their first attempts and scantiness of their resources. But, if cordial affection has been the principle of our development, it is to be the secret of our continuance; and, at a time when the world is shaken in the name of that tutelary principle, we can never be too often reminded of it. Therefore, in order never to forget the basis of our Society, the condition of our existence, the

guarantee of our future success, we shall presume to recommend to all our brothers, the meditation of the numerous passages in the general Rules, the Circulars and the Manual, in which those considerations are developed; we shall presume to beg the President of every Conference, when admitting new members, to insist upon it, so as to make them appreciate and love that fundamental character of the Society which they are entering. For that reason, we can never too earnestly exhort them to avoid whatever might even slightly injure that christian friendship, to banish all irritating discussions, to avert those started by vanity: on that our existence and progress depend.

But, as the Rules say, affection between the different members is not enough; it must likewise exist between different Conferences, different cities, different countries. Thanks to God, that love is strong and sincere; and the members of the Society who, in travelling, visit other Conferences, are welcomed with a joy that astonishes and a kindness that delights them. But if I were allowed, Sir and dear Brother, here to express a wish, it is that those relations should be less personal and consequently more frequent. No doubt, when a brother from abroad arrives among us, he is welcomed with joy and as a member of the family; no doubt, the Conferences correspond with the Council-General, and through that common medium, are mutually informed of whatever occurs of importance among them. But, on the one hand, those communications are often fugitive, and

the letters exchanged at distant intervals of time, give but insufficient details : and, on the other, is it not but too true that the Conferences do not sufficiently avail themselves of their proximity to one another, that they are too often ignorant of what is going on in the neighbourhood, and hear of it only through the accounts of the general meetings in Paris, or the annual publication of the General Report? What good might, however, result from more frequent intercourse! Very often a Conference, in the first days of its existence, has few members and slender resources, and stands in need of frequent advice for the practice of charity. Very often too, some good works, to be efficient and acquire useful extension, must be undertaken in common. In one place, it might be the recommendation of the apprentices going from one city to another to complete their apprenticeship ; in another, information to be collected for a poor man about to set out on a journey ; elsewhere, libraries to be founded, and whose riches would be multipled in a five or tenfold proportion, if volumes were from time to time exchanged with the different Conferences of the vicinity ; everywhere, in short, zeal would spread by the sole fact of the relations entered upon, the interest of the weekly meetings would increase, the general meeting of each Conference would become more full and animated; and I am not afraid of being mistaken when I affirm that if, as is already practised in a few localities, all the neighbouring Conferences kept up among themselves such daily and practical intercourse, this

would in nowise diminish the relations with the more distant Conferences and the Council-General ; if they had a centre of correspondance among themselves, a new impulse would be given to charity in our Conferences. In the families even the most closely united, when their members cease to visit mutually and to write frequently to each other; when, for the preservation of the ties of affection, they rely on the remembrances of childhood, the feelings of relationship and common principles ; those remembrances, feelings and principles, are, more or less rapidly, more or less completely, obliterated; but, they are still most certainly altered. In our vast family, in which we reckon so many disseminated members whom we shall perhaps never see, let those at least, who can see each other and shake hands together, avail themselves frequently of that privilege.

I have, in the third place, mentioned christian prudence. I shall not enter upon detailed rules ; they are infinitely varied, according to circumstances, places and persons. Any Conference animated with the true spirit of the Society, must be the best judge of their application : I shall only insist upon a few fundamental points, which you will, Sir and dear Brother, excuse my enumerating, as they concern all of us.

It seems to me that, in the present times, it is highly important for us never to forget that we are a Society of practical charity, and not one of speculative, and theoretical charity,—a Society that seeks to recall souls to God by the sweet effusion of christian benevolence, and not a Society

that discusses, struggles and courts public notice. Undoubtedly, the latter associations have their importance. Would not charity, without the light of study, soon cease to exist and become mere routine? Without christian polemics, which are also one of its branches, as was so eloquently said in one of our General meetings by one of the most illustrious interpreters of the Gospel, would not charity, thus mutilated, be incomplete? But every Society has its duties as well as its mission. Those among us, who have leisure and inclination, may mingle with those Societies in their own name; they may appear on the more brilliant stage of publicity, persuade and enlighten others by discussion. Let us avail ourselves of their labours and learning, but let us not engage our Conference in those struggles always too ardent: let us not join, *even as mere members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul*, those public manifestations that will lose nothing of their efficacy and splendour, though not supported by the name of our Conferences, and where our action will be the more free as it is the more personal. This wish will, I hope, be listened to and appreciated by all.

This brings me, Sir and dear Brother, to some reflections upon which the Council and several Conferences have wished to call the attention of us all. A tendency has of late been manifested in the Society which is not yet a danger, but which should nevertheless be stopped from the very outset. A few members, in their love for the Society, have thought it good, no doubt in order to

make it better known, to assume in public the title of Members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, even when their relations with the public had not the Society for their object. Such a precedent, if renewed, would be liable to great objection.

In the first place, is it right, when we are not performing a charitable deed with the direct concurrence of our Conference, to take the title of members? Evidently not, since we thus throw upon the Conference the responsibility of our action which it has neither consented to, nor solicited; and, if perchance our action has been imprudent, if we have allowed ourselves to be carried too far by our zeal, or if we have been misunderstood, shall we not in that case regret having thereby committed the name of the Society? Moreover, we are not members of St Vincent de Paul in the performance of all the duties of life, when we found any institution unconnected with the Society; still less *when engaged in our private affairs,* when transacting public business, each according to our situation. When we leave our meetings and the practice of our works, we leave our title also by the very nature of the act.

Ought we not, besides, to fear that this name imprudently assumed, might become the source of involuntary abuses; that new works with which the Society is and should be unconnected, however excellent they may be, might thus be imposed on members and whole Conferences; that commercial speculation might, to the great sorrow of our astonished brethren, endeavour to take ad-

vantage of it, and thus divert our action from its exclusive object, charity? Vain glory, with its subtle venom, might thus creep into our acts, and make us consider, as a title of honour, the quite plain and ordinary name of Member of a charitable Conference. Crowds of objections occur, and I will not dwell upon them any longer, because it seems to me they must strike every one. As a general rule therefore, we must assume that title only when performing what the Conference, to which we belong, enjoins upon us; justice and prudence equally require it.

I now come to some minor details less generally important, and of various nature, but which however I will not put off till my next letter.

I have mentioned above with gratification the habit of some of our brothers, who, when travelling, visit the Conferences of the cities through which they pass. Here again a few abuses, luckily of rare occurence, have crept in; persons who formerly had belonged to some Conference, and had been obliged to withdraw, have used that title, and even in some cases, certificates which had been delivered to them, to present themselves to other Conferences, and make the members of them participate in fictitious good deeds for their own benefit. Those abuses are not frequent, I say it again; but it is enough that they have existed, to make us be on our guard against facts that might if renewed, destroy salutary confidence between the members of the Society, and make it impossible for them to visit the Conferences to which they do not belong. To put an end to that

evil, the Council-General has decided, first, that the Secretary-General of the Society should never deliver any *certificate attesting that a person has belonged to the Society;* and that any member wishing to visit a provincial Conference, shall receive a special letter for the President of that Conference; second, that all the Conferences shall be invited to adopt a similar rule. With such easy precautions, it is believed that no further abuse can take place, and the Council trusts that those measures, adopted by all, will meet with complete adhesion and watchful execution...

Believe me, etc.

AD. BAUDON.

Paris, november 1st, 1849, All Saints'day.

Sir and Dear Brother,

. . . . . .

Zeal is all the life of christian works. Without it, the richest ones are unable to do good and have but an ephemeral prosperity. With it, they stand all the trials; they are never discouraged before obstacles nor disheartened and weary; with it, they are poor without being powerless, few in number without being inactive, overburdened with labour without being overwhelmed, because they are unceasingly drawing from themselves countless wealth, fecundity and vigour.

You may really apply to them that word of Scripture : *Dabo tibi thesauros absconditos.*

But is our zeal great enough ? Is it so great as it was a few years ago? Has it not been weakened in some of us in the midst of all the turmoil of the world we have passed through ? It is a serious question, which every one of us has to answer for his own self.

I only intend to examine it in general.

Since eighteen months we often meet people, who were formerly filled with the greatest zeal for the poor and who at the present moment stand aloof, come but irregularly to the meetings or attend them absently without taking any interest in them. « General matters of anxiety are so grave, they say, peace and tranquillity are so unsettled from one end of the world to the other, that it is impossible to keep sufficiently one's presence of mind and occupy one's self with such trifles as the granting of relief tickets or the gift of some clothes. » It is a deplorable error against which we should never stand too much ! Well ! I should say to those brothers, you are christian, you are rightly proud of being so, you try to conform your private life to the divine precepts of the gospel and you do not see that all those perturbations, all those wars, all those plagues that seem as if they should swallow up the present generation, are only caused by the forgetting of God ! The impious and unbelievers may look out for another explanation of that extreme upsetting and it is the consequence of that blindness in which they are left by God. But you who are christian

and catholic, enlightened by faith, taught by the story of the Church, and warned by the great voice of your Pastors, you do not admit that everything has perished because some people want to banish God from everything, and you are convinced that everything will only be restored on letting God entering again into our conscience and our public and private habits! You are consequently convinced that, if we do not apply ourselves to restore whole christian life, a part of which charity is evidently, it is vainly that we are moving and trying to improve and build up again! Since centuries it has been written : *Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui ædificant eam. Nisi Dominus custodierit civitatem, frustra vigilat qui custodit eam.* And that oracle of Eternal Wisdom is none of those, which a century, however prudent and well informed it may be, is able to deny.

There are however some of them who are insisting, and allege other duties, more urgent in the actual state of things than at any other time, namely, political duties. I am far, Sir and dear Brother, from wishing to dissuade anybody from doing his duty ; for every one of them is sacred, and the graver their end is, the more time they deserve that we devote to them. Above all I am far from wishing to give you here any advice whatever in such matters! For it has always been said, repeated and published amongst us that political matters should be banished from our charitable meetings, that we should not inquire about the opinions of each other on that

subject, convinced as we are that those opinions are dictated by conscience and ruled by christian moderation; and if such a wise rule had not been laid down, it would be now the right moment of establishing it in the interest of our union and our good harmony. But we must acknowledge that those duties, however important as they are, do not take so much our time as it should prevent us from giving a part of it to our Conference and to our poor. If we want to devote ourselves to the infortunate, we may still do so and we have only to want it steadily. Besides do not those duties, in proportion to their importance, make it absolutely necessary to the soul to rest from time to time? On the unsettled ground of human things, the most upright hearts may not agree together, their feelings may be wounded, they may become irritated. On the charitable ground, on the contrary, those who are the most separated from each other in other respects, ought to understand and to love one another, if they are christian. In the midst of those discussions, do not we find a comfort in our friendly meetings, that have only one end, the relief of the poor, and are only engaged in doing as much good as possible? There is no after-thought in the minds; all the questions are simple, clear and easy to be resolved in a practical way, and whilst elsewhere everything is a cause of division and separation, it may be said really about many christian that they have only one heart and one soul, *cor unum et anima una!*

The more difficult times are, the more we have, Sir and dear Brother, to develop in ourselves the

spirit of zeal and charity. The enemies to truth and faith, the Children of Darkness, as the Gospel says, give us here remarkable examples and perhaps we shall one day deplore before God not to have followed them. While we are hesitating, they are working; while we are keeping silence, they are speaking; while we are sparing ourselves trouble and fatigue, the are toiling hard. Let us also follow for the sake of God and in the interest of the poor committed to our care those so profitable lessons, or rather let us not pass near the good without noticing it. Let us imitate, in our respective sphere of action and in behalf of the various interests we are intrusted with, the courageous and generous men who are disheartened neither by danger nor by epidemics, and who are renewing their endeavours to face calamities before which most men feel weak and discouraged. Let us above all take pattern from the Saints who lived before us and who, like us, and still more, have had obstacles to overcome, and specially from Saint Vincent de Paul, our well beloved patron, thad model and that hero of christian zeal.....

I am coming now, without any transition, to the *general duties which at all times have concerned all the Conferences.*

Allow me, with due friendship, but also with complete freedom to call your attention to the points in which our zeal seems to fail.

The first that strikes me is the want of regular attendance at the meetings of certain Conferences. In some localities, there is a complaint of lack of zeal; members come late and leave early, or very

often do not come at all : consequently the punctual members are discouraged, the less zealous absent themselves, and the collections are greatly diminished. The evil should be immediately remedied, and therefore I appeal to the charity of *all* our brothers, to the love they bear the Society, their Conferences, their poor. I apply first to the Presidents, who have, here as everywhere, a great task to accomplish, and beseech them, in order to find a remedy for that *absenteeism,* to make it the constant subject of their thoughts, frequently to speak of it with the members, to have recourse to personal influence and exhortations, so powerful when springing from charity. But, if the Presidents ought to show the way and set the example, all the rest ought eagerly to follow it; I therefore appeal to every one of our brothers, and beg they will themselves remedy that evil, so easily cured. Let them consider how sad and wearisome is an incomplete meeting, that drags on slowly because part of the members arrive only when others have alrealy left; how discouraging for the zealous, how detrimental to Works, how injourious to the poor! When we form a charitable Society, it is to meet one another, to encourage mutually by our presence, and not to stay away.

Our meetings, I am told, are monotonous, and dwell on the same facts. Allow me to enquire whether it is not your own fault, if such is the case. Where a member finds among his poor some honourable act to mention, when he is so happy as to recall one of them to more christian-

like behaviour, or reclaim him from destitution, if he did not keep to himself that element of edification, if he related it with simplicity and without glorying in it, do not we believe that monotony would be dispelled? If, at stated periods, we were to review the moral and material condition of our families, do we not think that the part of the meeting devoted to that investigation would throw real interest upon the rest? We feel only for those whom we know, and we should know the poor of the Conference better. Would it not be the same, if in the interval between those quarterly or semiannual reviews of the families, we were to present to the Conference detailed reports, with precise and technical facts concerning the children in our schools, the clothing department, the rent-fund, the patronized apprentices, the library and all accessory Works? Each of these, taken separately, is not much; but, by degrees, we should get better acquainted with the whole of our work in which we too often see but *the poor of whom we have charge;* we should like and relish it; yet still I have not gone beyond the circle of the Conference, I have spoken only of the elements of edification it may draw from itself? But, if we consider that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul does not extend to a single parish only, but to nearly all the dioceses of France, and over many countries in Europe: that its pacific banner is planted in Africa, Asia and America, and that its charitable conquests are daily spreading in those distant regions; that, notwithstanding the distance between them, those

Conferences are united in the same spirit, under the same Rules; that their correspondences are, in their most instructive and attaching points, submitted in reports to the Conferences every other month; that besides, private correspondence is constantly going on between the different parts of this immense whole : what an inexhaustible fund of life, movement, initiative, imitation and zeal have we not there? We sometimes find there is nothing to do at the meeting, no object in it : for my own part, I only wonder at one thing : its not lasting longer, and, whenever we part, our not regretting to have left behind some good to do, some charitable thought to exchange.

If it is of importance for us to meet every week in order to perform the practical duties of charity, it is no less so to keep up the general meetings, provided for by the Rules, and in which, four times a year, the members active and honorary, after praying before the sacred altars, meet under the presidency of venerable clergymen, even often round the first pastors of the diocese, to sum up their labours for the charitable public. In the cities that contain several Conferences, the usefulness of those periodical meetings is self-evident; for, as we have stated many a time, they prevent the multiplicity of Conferences from becoming the cause of disorder, isolation and separation; they unite the brothers who have become too numerous to be together in one Conference, and to those who possess the spirit of the Society, they procure the greatest satisfaction, I mean that enjoyed in the midst of a numerous and affectionate

family. *Quam bonum est fratres habitare in unum!* we then exclaim. What new ardour we draw from it! What a holy emulation of the Conferences among themselves!

But those periodical meetings which generally bear within themselves their own justification in the large cities that possess many Conferences, have a tendency to be abandoned in single Conferences. What should we have to do, they say? What should we have to say to our subscribers, our honorary members, to the clergymen that would take the trouble of attending our meetings? Would it not be wasting their time and pains, and is not a single annual meeting enough for the modest sphere of our action.

I cannot too strongly contradict that opinion, Sir and dear Brother. First of all, it is evidently in opposition to the Rules of our Society, to the Brief granted by His Holiness, Pope Gregory XVI, of glorious memory, and conceding valuable indulgences to the members, who, after Mass and Communion, attend the General Meetings.

Moreover, if the custom of the four Meetings a year is abandoned, shall we not fear that the hearing of Mass on the festivals of the Society, may thereby be also left off; that we may thus deprive ourselves of the graces attached to prayer in common; that the honorary members, too long separated from the Society may at last forget it, and that in the general remissness, the zeal of the active members themselves may slacken? For those meetings a Report must be made, and therefore a study of the labours of the Conference, a

recurrence to the past. If little has been done, the members see it, not to grow discouraged thereby, but to feel humble and form more generous resolves. If much has been accomplished, the more intimate conviction gained by it adds to the activity, and gives it a new impulse. Even the petty cares of the preparations to be made, the very details of organization have their usefulness. We never enjoy things but in proportion to the labour they cost, and the obstacles to be overcome; and a Society that has none of those periodical excitements, languishes for that very reason.

We must therefore strongly adhere to the custom of general meetings, such as they are provided for by the Rules, even in isolated and thinly attended Conferences. But if we wish to render those meetings more efficient by making them more attractive, the example of a few Conferences affords us infallible means for that purpose, which I can confidently point out. Instead of always holding the general meetings in their own town, these Conferences agree with those of the neighbouring towns, to meet sometimes in the chief city of the diocese or ecclesiastical province; at other times elsewhere, by turns. All the Conferences in the neighbourhood are then convoked to the appointed place; there each makes its report, exposes the special works it has adopted; there new plans are communicated, bases are laid for new Works to be undertaken in common, the ties of intimacy are made closer, and all leave those meetings of charity with greater fervour and mo-

re devoted love for the poor. Let all the Conferences in the same ecclesiastical circumscription follow that example, let them agree to hold in *common* at least two of the four general meetings; let them, according to local requirements, appoint the most convenient meeting place, and the interest inherent to those family festivities will soon settle them for ever among our usages.

A third point which it is of importance not to neglect, is the zeal to attract new members to the Conferences. It has been said several times among us, but cannot be repeated too often : " If abandoned to ourselves, where are the poor whom we visit, the apprentices whom we patronize, the ignorant whom we teach? In order to practise charity, we must belong to a Work, a Conference, or otherwise the time allotted to the poor never comes. " Let us then meditate on that thought, meditate on it attentively : besides a Society that does not grow, decays; absence, sickness, change of circumstances, death do bring in but too many vacancies; and, if we do not fill them up beforehand by inviting to us such persons as we may admit, a day will come when we shall be frightened at our loneliness. This has happened in these late times of crisis, among a few Conferences, which the departure of some of their members left in a state of lamentable perplexity. It would again take place, if increased perseverance were not displayed. I know that we have to be cautious, and, allow me to remind you of it, never to introduce among us any but men animated with our own spirit, that is sincere christians who

perform all the duties prescribed by the Church, *without blushing at any;* but within those limits, which I cannot too earnestly beseech the Conferences to observe, are there not, especially in large cities, many Christians charitable and capable of edifying us, and exciting us to virtue, whose names would be an honour to our lists, who might share in our labours; and who do not, solely because no one invites them? Undoubtedly, everywhere, and with the exception of a few places less favourably situated, the number of the members might be doubled by the slightest efforts, sometimes even still more increased, and there would be so many devoted servants gained over to the poor of Jesus Christ.

In the fourth place, do we enough for the religious instruction of the poor? That instruction, we must acknowledge, is almost entirely wanting among them, and, if the poor suffer from the need of material resources, they suffer much more still from the total ignorance of the truths of faith. Here, prevails total indifference for religion; there, open hostility; and those two evils spring from one and the same cause, ignorance. Indeed what rightful and honest heart could know Jesus Christ without loving him, and admiring, at least speculatively, the beauty of his law? The poor therefore are much more in need of truth, of the words that come from God's mouth, than of bread and clothing. Well, among us, we have for their instruction the Holy-Families, the familiar Instructions, the Society of Saint Francis Xavier; but do these associations, that flourish in a few

Conferences, easily extend and propagate abroad? Alas! they do not. Most of us admire and forget. *Laudatur et alget.* We return with emotion from a meeting of the Holy Family, but we do not think of establishing it among ourselves. We praise the Society of Saint Francis Xavier, and we stop at the first obstacle. We may have libraries, but we allow the books to accumulate and grow mouldy in them. Instead of carrying them to the poor, if they do not come for them, we leave them in a corner, and say: "The poor, the mechanics do not read." As if millions of volumes were not every day devoured by them; as if the school, catechism, patronage-house, the Societies of Saint Francis Xavier, of the Holy family, and above all the visiting of the poor were not always open channels for the families entrusted to our care, to draw instruction and faith from, if we knew how to supply them. Alt that no doubt requires pains, time, perseverance; but without those sacrifices, what merit can we acquire?...

The field of those Works is necessarily unlimited, since they are either individual or transient. Every one may here follow the impulse of his heart and the dictates of his charity; but there are two works to which I more especially call the attention of those brothers, — I mean the visiting of the sick and the teaching of the catechism, with the concurrence and permission of the Clergy. The usefulness of the former will not be denied by those who know the destitution in which the sick poor are left in isolated dwellings, farms or even in villages. The latter is no less indispen-

sable. Indeed, what difficulties do not the village priests experience in instructing the children for their first communion! How much ignorance to dispel, apathy to overcome, inactivity to rouse up! How many times have not the plainest truths to be repeated, to penetrate into those hard and refractory memories, and to engrave in those hearts, already engrossed by earthly interest, the pure principles which alone constitute the true Christian. You have already been edified by reading in the General Report for 1848, the fruits produced at Aix by a Work organized to go on Sundays and teach catechism to the little children in the country. Such are the results I covet for our Society upon which they would draw down great blessings, because they would secure for the Church a generation of Christians provided with sound instruction...

I have last to answer a question that has been put to the Council-General, and to which I call your whole attention.

The Council-General is often asked, and has been more particularly on a recent occasion, to state the precise cases when the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul are allowed to sign letters, documents, articles, with that denomination, and those much more numerous when it is important that they should not.

Our answer will be plain and precise, and will, we hope, put an end to every difficulty.

Whenever a member has not consulted his Conference, he has no right to assume the title of member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul,

and to write either to civil magistrates or to religious superiors, or to private persons with that title, even when speaking of affairs connected with the concerns of the Conference. A private member has no right to commit it, in some manner, by setting forward its name, to make it responsible for his opinion, or perhaps involuntary error. The right of engaging the responsibility of the Conference, belongs only to the Presidents *in urgent cases;* for, when the Conference can be consulted, it should be so necessarily. For a still better reason, when things unconnected with the object of the Society are treated, affairs religious, political, even charitable, but for which we have not met, nobody, whether a private member, a President, a Council either Particular or General, should connect the name of the Society with their opinion. The reason of this is obvious. We are not members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul for any other object than visiting the poor, patronizing children, undertaking, in short, the good Works which charity suggests. That title is not a public title, or one of honour inseparably connected with our names in all the circumstances of our lives : it is merely an engagement to be more zealous, more charitable, and especially more humble. So, using it as a thing to be vain of, or as a means of success, would be erring most seriously against the Society and against ourselves.

To sum up, then, we may act as members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, only when acting in the name of our Conference, when we

have been authorized to do so, and for the affairs that especially concern it. When these three conditions are not fulfilled, we must carefully abstain.

Believe me, etc.,

AD. BAUDON.

Paris, november 1st 1851,
All Saint's Day.

Dear Sir and Brother,

One of the last numbers of the Bulletin, has informed you of the signal favour which our holy Father, the Pope, has just conferred on our Society, by appointing a Cardinal protector, and the mere news of it must have gladdened your heart. I have long wished to write to you on that subject and rejoice with all the Conferences at an event so happy for them; I have till now been prevented from so doing, by my wish to transmit to you the official papers concerning the appointment of his Eminence Cardinal Fornari, as the protector of the Society; but as they have not yet reached us, I will not delay this circular any longer.

Pending the arrival of the official letters from Rome, which the Council-General will hasten to communicate to the Conferences as soon as they are received, it is impossible for me not to make you notice, dear Brother, how precious that distinction is for our Society. Granted hardly four months

after the demand was made, far from introducing any modification into our Rules, usages and homely hierarchy, it is for us a new and valuable testimonial of the kindness with which the Church views our labours and approves our direction. Joined with the paternal blessings constantly granted us by the Bishops, with the two Briefs of Indulgences conceded by Gregory XVI, of venerable memory, it constitutes the greatest encouragement we could hope, and once more consecrates our institution in the eyes of the faithful.

Besides, it secures us near the Holy See, at the very centre of the Catholic world, a zealous protector, a vigilant guardian of our interests, in his Eminence Cardinal Fornari, whom the Catholics of France, after those of Belgium, have learnt to surround with such gratitude and respect, and whose inexhaustible devotedness the Conferences of both countries have several times experienced. Lastly, in order that everything, even in the least details, should contribute to make our joy more complete, so important a measure has been for the whole Society an occasion of drawing closer the ties of confraternity which unite its different branches. If it has been obtained with such promptitude, it is impossible not to attribute it mostly to the demands of our brothers in Rome, and to the Superior Councils abroad. The petitions addressed by those Councils to the Holy Father, have testified to the unanimity of the feelings and thoughts which, in Holland, Belgium, Germany and Great Britain, as well as in Mexico

and Canada, unite all the disciples of Saint Vincent de Paul.

In the presence of so powerful an encouragement, dear Brother, what other feelings can we have than that of humble gratitude to God, and a sincere wish to devote ourselves still more than we have yet done to a Society so visibly blessed, notwithstanding the littleness of its origin, and the weakness of those who compose it? Indeed it seems to me that this double feeling must be engraved in our hearts, it must penetrate them every day more deeply, and be the soul and life of our Conferences.

. . . . . .

If we think of what our dear Society was in the outset, and what it is now; if we follow it in its unhoped for development, from the first assembly that united a few brethren insecure of the future, to the union of about 700 Conferences which it now presents, spread over 17 different countries, we cannot but be convinced of the providential interference of God among us. Indeed, it is not man who has done all those things, has united so many hearts, has made but one soul of so many persons till then mere strangers to one another; it is not man that has overcome all the obstacles which seemed to render our undertaking impossible, and against which, before us, so many attempts had failed, though better directed and more vigorous than ours; for man cannot create members with imperceptible elements, unity with diversity; he does not raise life out of nothing... God alone has that power, and we

must here recognize His powerful and creative hand. But if God has so miraculously multiplied the number of our first brothers, if He has gained us the sympathies of the world, and, what is much more valuable for Christians, the blessings of the Church, it is not for a sterile object : most of all, it is not that we may pride ourselves on our progress, and look complacently upon our own deeds ; it is in order that we should correspond with His designs upon the poor with unabated zeal ; for much is asked of him who has received much : that is what God requires of us, and we cannot refuse Him without ingratitude.

But in what, dear Brother, does that zeal consist ?—In persevering, without our slackening ; in remaining after months and years of a charitable life, as eager as in the beginning, to assist the poor,—in being as full of zeal and affection for them as on the first day, notwithstanding the ungratefulness we may have met with : —In forgetting the little we have done to see but the immense task that remains to be performed, and never saying : " 'tis enough ; we visit so many poor, we patronize so many apprentices, there is nothing left us to do." Zeal is more persevering and bolder. Constantly struck with the immense miseries that surround it, and especially with the religious ignorance of the poor, it keeps its eyes fixed upon that boundless extent, and is eager to go on without stopping. And indeed, in these days of indifference, what man of faith could witness unmoved, those multitudes that are godless born, godless live, and godless die, for

whom religious life is an unknown world, christian consolations, a vain superstition; the dogmas and laws of the Church, a puerility of past ages? What christian could view with a quiet eye the practical atheism that daily gains ground, that expels the idea of God from the joys as from the sufferings and labours of the family; that accustoms numberless christians more and more to live as if God did not exist, and were not their friend and support, their most tender and compassionate father? If such a picture, that has nothing exaggerated in it, were oftener present to our minds, how much more generous and active would be our zeal! how much more devotedness should we feel! how much leisure should we find for the works that require some time and steadiness! how much, by taking from our pleasures and fancies, from our very necessities, should we increase the funds of our Conferences, and enable them to do more good! how ardent, especially, should we be to spread the christian word about us, to multiply the institutions for religious instructions, the catechisms, Holy Families, Societies of Saint Francis Xavier, of Saint Francis Regis! How many imaginary difficulties and impossibilities would melt before us, that stop us only because we have not a strong will, and do not see the greatness of the evil and the necessity of the remedy!

I am thoroughly convinced of it, Sir and dear Brother, and you will no doubt, share my conviction: if we are all imbued with those truths, *so as to make them the foundation of our lives,* an im-

mensity of good may be accomplished by our Society. Already spreading over a multitude of places, it may still extend its branches infinitely over towns, villages, houses of education. It may increase the number of its institutions, however large this appears to our personal weakness; it may raise around it a multitude of new Societies, that, doing what it cannot do, will complete its action and glorify God still more. It may, lastly and above all, multiply itself by the activity of its members and their intelligent devotion. For you know what miracles God can work wich a handful of men that correspond with his designs; it was with twelve fishermen that he converted the world in the origin of christianity; at a less distant time, it was with Saint Francis Xavier that he shook the vast empires of India and Japan; with Saint Vincent de Paul that he regenerated France; and around us, within our reach and consequently in a more limited and humbler sphere, how many times have we not seen brothers isolated, but animated with the burning fire of charity, do alone what seemed impossible to whole Conferences? Let us therefore all without exception, fulfil the part to which God calls us: let us lose no occasion, however slight, of doing good; and, being now so numerous, we may console many who grieve, and recall to faith through charity many hearts that doubt or blaspheme God...

Such are, Sir and dear Brother, the thoughts raised in our hearts by the new favour received from the common Father of the faithful. I submit them to your meditations as the most consoling, and

moreover the most useful for the progress of our dear Conferences. The institutions inspired by God have to fear neither obscurity, nor the weakness of their means, nor outward storms. Their only peril is internal degeneracy.

I now pass to several points, of which the Council-General requests me to remind you.

1. Several times already, the Council has thought it its duty to call the attention of the Conferences to the inconveniences of publishing our works and reports in political newspapers. The greater number of the Conferences, with an eagerness for which we cannot be too grateful, accepted those observations, and sedulously adhered to them. Nevertheless, from time to time, that rule adopted by the Society from the very beginning is set aside. I certainly admit that those publications offer some advantages : I know too that it is not always easy to prevent publicity from seizing upon our reports, and that we sometimes have to resist spontaneous kindness ; but however I beseech the Conferences *never* to court such insertions in *public* papers, and to prevent them *whenever* they can. In the present circumstances amidst the conflict of the opinions and differences that divide the most upright and sterling souls, our Society, founded all for charity, and only for charity, must more than ever keep that neutral ground : and not only does it matter that it be really neutral ; but, for the good it has to do, for its religious action on the poor, for its consideration and independence with the public, for the regeneration of its members, it is important it should be considered as

such by every candid man. Well, public papers necessarily have a political colour; they are enlisted in this or that party; they are the representation of some idea or other, and if our Reports appear in them, if the name of the Society is repeated by them with praise, it is impossible that, in the course of time, many persons should not attribute to us this or that political opinion. Vainly shall we, by our deeds and words, avoid that intercourse as much as possible : the blow will nevertheless be dealt, and all our Conferences will suffer from it. That should therefore be a subject of serious reflexion for our brothers.

2. The season we are entering upon necessarily brings on a great movement in our Conferences. In all the cities that have a Faculty of law or medicine, and especially in Paris, many young men will arrive from colleges and ecclesiastical seminaries, to finish their studies in those Faculties; who having hitherto preserved their faith and morals, wish to place them under the tutelary protection of charity. I advise all our brothers of the towns which those young men, still full of piety, are about to leave, not to let them go without a letter of introduction for the Conferences of the cities in which they are to stop, and especially not without begging them earnestly to deliver those letters on the very day of their arrival, and *before engaging definite lodgings* (1). That detail may seem insignificant at first sight : but all those

1. In Paris, address all letters to the Council-General, rue Furstenberg, 6.

of our brothers, who have themselves passed through those trials, know how important it is to be directed first to respectable houses, and not to be left, with no experience of that new life, to the mercy of chance or dangerous companions. Very often those first moments decide whether a young man is to be for ever good, or bad. Therefore for all, who have avoided those perils or who have never been exposed to them, it is a real duty to hold out a willing hand to such as have to pass through them; this is one of the most direct, and I shall add the most sweet applications of the counsels in the Gospel: "Do to others as you would have others do unto you." This is also one of the most positive duties of our Society, and one which has perhaps drawn most blessings upon it.

And with regard to that, it will doubtless be to the purpose to speak of a point that has real importance.

There has sometimes been a complaint in the Conferences, that the new comers are not properly received, that they are suffered to sit down unnoticed among their new brothers, without any words of welcome and encouragement, without even being introduced to the old members: thence it happens that, in large cities especially, the members very often do not know each other, even by name, or at least there no longer prevails amongst all that intimacy and cordiality which ought to be the essence of our Conferences; then the new comers are discouraged, become timid, stand apart, and if they do not leave the Conference, which sometimes happens, they have less taste for it, and come

to like it only after a long time. A very simple means is offered to remedy that evil, more serious than may be thought at first sight, as it threatens the very life of our Conferences; it is that, in every Conference, a member appointed by the President, if not the President himself, should have special charge of the new-comers, in order to initiate them to our usages, to make them acquainted with the Rules and our other publications, to establish relations of confraternity between them and the other members, and when they come from other towns to give them all useful information for settling properly. If those introducers are obliging, they will no doubt powerfully remedy the danger that we speak of; and the Conferences will then feel an increase of activity and expansion, and of that harmless cheerfulness which constitutes their charm and attraction.

3. In many cities, we might nearly say in all those which attract a great number of students, it is also a general complaint that our Conferences, founded in behalf of youth, and intended to keep it by charity under the mild influence of religion, reckon few or no young men. "We are all old," say those who write to us, "we do not attract youth, and after us, what will become of the Conference?" Without quite sharing those fears, we must acknowledge there is a remedy wanted. For, if men already advanced in age and mature in piety do reap fruit for their own improvement from their mutual contact, how much more valuable still are not those fruits for young and ardent souls that have to resist the passions of their age,

the counsels of friends perhaps far from being good christians, and principally their own inexperience and loneliness! Evidently, if it is good to form a Conference solely with men advanced in age, for want of other elements, if we must not stop in creating a Conference for the want of younger men, it is most good and excellent that there be in the same Conference a happy union of mature and younger brothers in order that the qualities of the former should support those of the latter.

But, you say, how can we draw youth to us? We call them eagerly, and no one comes. Here are two means that can be used. The first, adopted in several Conferences, consists in forming within the Conference a little section of aspiring members, and giving those young brothers an interest in our works, by entrusting to them, under the guidance of an older member, the care of a few old men, and the management of their small resources.

At the age of 12, 13 or 14, when the salutary impressions of the first communion are still powerful, it is easy thus to assemble young children, and teach them the sweet apprenticeship of charity; and then, when arrived at the age of 18 or 20, those young men, in some manner reared in the midst of the Conference, accustomed to attend it without any fear of opinion, will easily join it as ordinary members; while it is much less easy to draw to it isolated young men of the same age, whom bashfulness and timidity keep away, and who know they will not find about

them, brothers of their age with whom they can more willingly sympathize. The organization of special Conferences for those who aspire to become members does therefore seem to us a sure means of destroying the evil (1).

The second means would consist in establishing a connexion with the Conferences of educational institutions, which, thanks to God, are beginning to rise among us, and will, according to appearances, become still more numerous. Whether those Conferences exist in the same town as the ordinary Conferences, or at some distance, it is easy to enter into friendly intercourse with them, to exchange Reports, to assist at theip General Meetings, and to invite them in their turn to those of the Conferences. Those relations will naturally induce the young men, when they leave their Schools, to join the Conferences of the towns in which they reside, and the passage from college to charitable life will be immediately effected. I do specially recommend to our Conferences that capital point : for the Conferences of educational establishments are real seminaries for our Society, and it is of importance to avail ourselves of the new vigour with which they can every year supply us.

In the last place, it is not enough to draw new brothers to our meetings; we must endeavour to make those meetings pleasant by a gentle and justifiable cheerfulness. Allow me, in order to answer complaints that reach us from time to time, to set before you a passage of a circular already

1. See for more details the *Bulletiu,* t. I, p. 12.

old, and by which our worthy Brother, Mr. Gossin, alluded to the importance of that point. Those words, I believe, will bear fruit.

"No Conference has ever offended against propriety or charity, because laughter has been allowed among its members. Sometimes even laughter is excellent : it revives attention, prevents sleepiness, excites cordiality, and appeases too violent dissents. It is the best sign of that spirit of decent freedom that should prevail among us, and that is at the same time a pleasure and a very great charm. — The Conferences that afford most plentiful relief to the poor are those in which charity is practised cheerfully, because the members are anxious to attend the meetings. Weariness is to a Conference what smoke is to a bee-hive " (1).

If that advice so true and of such admirable simplicity is followed, if we besides obviate the timidity so natural to young men, and do not let them stand apart for want of kind welcome, if we stimulate their zeal by asking much of their charity and leisure ; youngmen, I am fully convinced, will come more willingly and in greater number to fill up our Conferences, and it will be a gain for all, for them in the first place, then for the poor and for our Society.

Such are, Sir and dear Brother, the general questions which I have deemed useful to treat with you. None of those, indeed, are really new to us, and that is the very reason for which I submit them with greater confidence. In charitable

1. See above the circular letter of the 1st november 1847.

as well as in christian life, we seek less to do new things than to do better and with continual progress what we have begun; you will therefore excuse a few repetitions, if I have succeeded in doing good to some of our Conferences and kindling among us a few sparks of that fire which consumed our Holy Patron, and made him accomplish such miracles of charity.

Believe me, etc.

AD. BAUDON.

Paris, november 1st 1852,
All Saint's Day.

Sir and dear Brother,

I do not intend, in this letter, to revert to the principal points which characterize our Society, and the importance of which has been so many times developed in preceding circulars. Though it is always of use to insist upon those fundamental bases of our Works, it has seemed to me it would be better, for the present, to refer to our Rules, our Circulars, and our Manual such of our brothers as might want to be enlightened on the subject, and that we should rather investigate together a few details that have been more rarely exposed.

Details are, indeed, the life of a Work, as we were recently told by an eloquent preacher (1):

1. M. Pététot, Recollections of the St. Roch Conferences.

alone they are nothing, as we might say, but by their concurrence, their combination, their daily recurrence, they constitute in fact nearly the whole Work. Without them, everything lingers and decays, because at every instant some occasion of doing good has been lost, because a slight abuse has crept in, and in the practice of charity, as well as in that of christian life, slight faults unperceived but frequently repeated, assume enormous proportions.

I shall therefore confine myself, for this time, to such points of the Rules as may be called secondary, but which gain importance from their number; and the usefulness of this seems to me the greater, because if, in general, we like to read over and over again the *preliminary considerations of the Rules,* we most often neglect the more tedious reading of the *articles* themselves...

I begin with what relates to the Boards of the Conferences.

1st. — Boards of the Conferences.

Our Society, as we have often said, has for its special object the christian improvement of its members : therefore all that relates to them is the capital point and the subject of most of the letters which we receive. The principal questions addressed to us relate to the choice and duties of the members of the Board and especially the Presidents. We shall answer them briefly.

1. — *President.* We all conceive the importance of his office; for although the President is never

among us but a sort of elder brother, the *primus inter pares,* one of us, who has to direct the labours of all, without subjecting any to his will; experience has shown that *what the President is, the Conference is also.* If he is active, pious and zealous; if he loves our works, and knows how to communicate to others the charitable fervour which animates him, the Conference is sure to thrive. If, on the contrary, he is not punctual and assiduous, if he often puts off to the next day the execution of the measures that have been voted, if he let the meetings grow monotonous, and the discussions come to no end, the Conference will necessarily suffer. Consequently when a Conference (1) has to make the difficult choice of a President, it must, FIRST OF ALL, examine whether he has the *leisure* requisite for attending to the Works and interests of the Conference, whether he has *zeal*, which often makes a man find sufficient leisure; whether he has *activity* of mind as well as *maturity* of judgment; whether he *understands* our institutions, and will consequently be able to overcome the difficulties that always occur in the practice of charity, instead of shrinking from them; whether he has the spirit of *conciliation* that prevents or appeases dissensions; and, lastly whether he has that lively and ardent faith that communicates itself to others and multiplies forces by gaining the favours of God. All

1. Whenever several Conferences exist in the same city, and a particular Council has therefore to be organised, the appointment of the presidents of Conferences and special Works belongs by article 31st of the Rules, to the particular Council.

this we should most look for in the President of a Conference. The other qualities, such as well established and deserved consideration in the neighbourhood, great personal generosity, the advantages of birth or fortune, should rank only afterwards. If they are found at the same time as the above mentioned qualities in a President, we must thank Divine Providence as for a signal favour : but the latter alone should not determine our choice; for the prosperity of the Conferences demands first of all the personal qualities of those who direct them; their action is not honorary and nominal, but real and effective; it is a direct and constantly active participation in the labours of the Conference. Without those essential conditions of prosperity and life, other external qualities will be of slender assistance; this the history of Christian Societies teaches no less than faith.

The President of a Conference is the soul of it, as we have said, and that thought cannot be too present to his mind; but however, through excess of zeal, he must not, as it were, absorb the activity of the Conference in his own. It is good that he should see and direct every important thing done by it, and share in it at least by his advice; it is not proper that he be overloaded and should assume alone the burden of all the works; for not only would that method in most cases exceed his strength, but it would present the serious objection of accustoming the other members to rely too much upon the President, and not enough on themselves; of therefore allowing their zeal to abate, and, in the case of a change of President, of

exposing the Conference to a real and sometimes serious crisis.

But the President has not only to attend to the Works of the Conference : he must, besides, also take care of its members. Thus, when one of them is sick or in affliction, the President will be the material and ordinary interpreter of the Conference, to fulfil through him the duties required by circumstances. Should a member, formerly active and zealous, gradually withdraw from the Conference, and leave it entirely, it is the President's duty to mind it, to see if anything has hurt this brother, and whether it is not possible to soothe his feelings; or, should that abatement of zeal unfortunately come from abatement of faith and forgetfulness of religion, it is still the President's office to attend to it, and take prudently and rapidly the most proper measures to stop the evil...

As for the Vice-Presidents, who are the substitutes and assistants of the Presidents, and who consequently must be intimately united with him, the rules concerning them are the same as those just exposed.

2. *Secretary.* — The office of Secretary, though less important than the President's, does however deserve a special mention; for, if the President has the whole direction, the Secretary has the practical detail of it. On his punctuality or neglect will therefore depend a multitude of good things or of petty annoyances.

Thus, when the Secretary is absent or late, the minutes are not read, or cannot be at the time appointed by the Rules, which is the best; when

he does not note down exactly the families visited and the names of their visitors, objectionable irregularities are the consequence; some families are long forgotten, and suffer from that abandonment; others, on the contrary, receive unnecessarily double assistance. Although those slight irregularites are not serious in themselves, they nevertheless annoy some members, cause the loss of valuable time, and diminish the general animation of the Conference.

Such inconveniences are, *in a certain degree*, unavoidable in a Society like ours, composed of so many changeable elements and men who are often very busy. However they are far from being serious in the great majority of the Conferences; in most of them, on the contrary, all works with admirable regularity. I should nevertheless wish the necessary punctuality to prevail among all; the register of the poor to be always in due order. I would advise that, opposite the name and direction of each family and the usual assistance granted, one should write, in the column of observation, the honourable facts that concern them, the extraordinary assistance granted, and the principal remarks made by their visitors. Such a list, which to be kept in order would hardly take a quarter of an hour a week, would afford valuable information and be especially useful to new visitors.

3. *Treasurer*. — If punctuality is necessary in the Secretary, it is still more so in the Treasurer : for, if he is absent from the meeting, the members cannot have their tickets, and the poor are exposed to starving; if he does not keep his accounts in

perfect order, he may commit mistakes. Though on that point there have been as yet very few complaints in the Society, I think it good to remind a few Conferences of Article 19 of the Rules, by which it is said that the Treasurer shall expose the situation of his cash-book at every meeting. That article is of real importance : on the one side, by every time making known to members the amount of cash on hand, it will make every one ask only in proportion of the available resources, and on the other, because it is a security against errors. I therefore request the Conferences that have delayed the weekly accounts of the Treasurers, simply to return to the observance of the Rule. For a still better reason I shall request the Treasurers never to let the Conference be behindhand with its creditors : that would be the surest means of ruining it.

Meetings of the Board of the Conference.—A thing important to be recommended, Sir and dear Brother, is that the Board of the Conference should frequently meet. The general Rule has appointed no fixed periods for such meetings, and they should indeed change, according to circumstances; but it is nevertheless important that the President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, should from time to time consult together, either to settle certain details that would uselessly fatigue the Conference, or to prepare the measures to be proposed to its deliberation or to fix upon the means of carrying out the decisions adopted. This usage is perhaps not general, and I think it of use to mention it.

Admission of new members.—I shall also call the attention of the Conferences to the admission of new members, less to repeat what has been said already so often, that we should admit among us only sincere christians, fulfilling without weakness or ostentation all the duties imposed by the Church, and particularly that of paschal communion : less to revert to that rule which could not be forgotten with impunity, than again to insist upon the mode itself of introducing members.

Article 18th of the Rule provides that "if new candidates are presented, the President shall state their names," and the Circular of July 14th, 1841, in some manner developing this article, says : "besides, we request those, who intend to present a candidate, always to confer previously on the subject with the President, who has more special charge of the direction and honour of the Conference."

The wisdom of such a recommendation is easily understood ; for if those who present a candidate, *instead of conferring privately with the president,* do first, as happens too often, publicly propose the candidate to the Conference, it becomes much more difficult to prevent an undesirable accession. In public any discussion of a man's name, any hesitation, any question assumes the appearance of a personal insult; then, unless some serious charge can be brought against the candidate, every one stands back and remains silent, though he may secretly deplore the new admission ; therefore, new members come in without the approval of all ; we do not wish to accept, but we dare not

reject them, and thence arise in the Conferences discrepancies and difficulties. If, on the contrary, the presentation is always made with the agreement of the President, it is likely that it takes place only because it ought, and that satisfactory testimonials have been received from the friends of the candidate. The reasons in support of what we say are numberless, and the Council-General earnestly insists that the Conferences should not, either through carelessness or forgetfulness, depart from a Rule so simple in its application, but so important in its results...

§ 2. — Order of the Meetings.

The general Rules, from Article 15 to 26, lay down the order of the meetings in the Conferences. I think it useful to insist upon a few of the Rules prescribed in these Articles, and especially upon their spirit.

A first point of importance is not to let the meetings grow tediously long. The business of the poor must, doubtless, not be transacted hastily and with undue precipitancy; but also we must allow each affair only a reasonable time, so that in general, within an hour or an hour and a half, the meeting be over. Otherwise we run the risk of wearying the members by too long attendance, of discouraging those who are busy, or accustoming them to come only at the end, *to give in their contribution and receive their tickets:* a new proof that questions of detail often have a decisive inffluence over the whole of our institutions.

It is the President especially who should cut the evil short, by stopping discussions that are unduly prolonged, and recalling the members, mildly but persistently, to practical views. If he wishes to succeed in this, it is good he should draw out for himself, before each meeting, an order of the day modelled on what the rules provide for the order of the meetings. Then, as soon as the discussion wanders from the point or is prolonged, he may more easily insist that it be closed, because serious or more urgent business is still to be considered; and at the same time he is more certain of forgetting nothing, as before the meeting he has reflected on the principal questions that occur, and the written text reminds him of what the discussion might make him forget.—But if the greater share in the good direction given to the meeting is the President's, he must also be seconded by the members. All must endeavour, *as much as possible, and whenever they are not hindered by imperious motives*, to arrive at the time appointed for the opening of the meeting. Nothing so much disturbs order or rather makes it impossible, as a succession of persons who arrive, withdraw, rise, take their tickets, give into the Treasurer's purse in the middle of the meeting. For the sake of the good order of the meetings as well as for that of the poor which is connected with it, it is greatly to be wished that every one should bind himself to more punctuality, even at the expense of his pleasures, or of affairs that are not indispensable.

A second point to be noticed, Sir and dear Brother, is the great importance given by our rules

to the reading made at the beginning to the meetings. "The prayer and reading, says Article 15, should be attended to with the most serious attention, the object of the Conference being no less to keep up the piety of the members than to relieve the poor." Those words, so short and simple, require no reflection for their support; and if, in a few Conferences, the Article is slightly forgotten, I hope it will suffice to place the text before the eyes of the members, in order to remedy the evil. But I think it proper to mention here what is done in one of our most ancient Conferences, and what I have always thought well calculated to render the reading more interesting. In that Conference, whenever a member, in private readings, meets with remarkable passages, that may edify his brethren, he communicates them to the President, and, with the approbation of the latter, to the Conference. Thus, edification is supported by interest, and zeal nourished by the new aliments it receives from all quarters.

In the third place, certain Conferences should be more careful than they are to read the *Bulletin of the Society*. I doubtless understand, Sir and dear Brother, that the Bulletin which might often serve as a spiritual reading, should not be the only one; most of all I conceive that many of the subjects it contains, useful for the reading of every one in private, are not suited to an assembly that has little time at its disposal. But allow me to express my regret at seeing that, in some Conferences, the Bulletin is hardly known, and that even the parts containing the advice given by the

Council General are not read. Hence, those monthly communications, to which the generality of the Society attaches such importance, are totally interrupted, and some members are acquainted neither with the newly undertaken works, nor with the edifying facts that occur, nor with the progress of our Society, so well calculated to excite our zeal. I therefore avail myself of this opportunity to ask that *at least* every month, and in every Conference, a summary account be given of the principal recommendations or the most important facts contained in the Bulletin, and then that the Bulletin itself be circulated among the members: they might form associations of ten to receive it, as is done for the Annals of the Propagation of Faith.

Lastly, we shall consider a detail, which, though it may seem trifling at first sight, is nevertheless serious: I mean the choice of the place of meeting. There are several Conferences which I might name, and which, to my personal knowledge, do really suffer, for want of a proper room. Dark, badly lit up, still worse fitted up, certain Conference rooms rather resemble a tomb than the meeting-place of members of Saint-Vincent de Paul. When the meeting takes place at night, one can hardly see oneself and recognise one's neighbour by the assistance of a few lights too sparingly disposed, and it is literally true, as I myself have seen, that the President presides in the dark, and is compelled to ask every member his name, which he cannot guess in the obscurity. Now, let any one tell me, if with such imperfect arrangements, one

can hope to attract the youth who need movement, light and life. Who can expect, with attractions so slender, to make up for other pleasures, even that of walking? Can one believe that the members will not find the meeting monotonous and repair to it with reluctance? Such an opinion requires a dose of optimism that I, for one, do not possess.

It is therefore important that all the Conferences should have *proper* meeting-rooms. I do not at all mean that we should have there the refinements of elegance and luxury, that would be quite out of place in a Society devoted to the service of the poor; but material precautions, often simple and inexpensive, should provide for what the real interest of the Conference requires.

§ 3. — Visiting of the Poor.

The visiting of the poor is the great Work of the Conferences, that which best suits their members, their intimate requirements, that which is easiest and most attractive, in short that without which *any Conference languishes*, as we are taught by nineteen years' experience. This has been said so often among us, that I can but refer the members, who might feel any doubts on the subject, to the many passages of the Manual relative to the point, and principally to the Circular of July 2nd, 1845, which bears specially upon it.

But, if I do not consider the general question, it is because many details occur to me that are not

yet included in the Circulars, and deserve to be mentioned.

Thus, in the first place, it is highly important that the families be assigned to the different members only by the President, and with proper discrimination. A member may suit nearly every family, and not succeed with some of the poor; he may be too weak, too timid, or on the contrary too strict, to fulfill successfully his charitable mission with certain exceptional minds. If the President does not pay the greatest attention to the distribution of the poor, if he relies on chance for the performance of that duty, good may very often become the more difficult, or impossible. It is, besides, important that the families, in which there are females still young, should be entrusted only to members of mature age, and placed not only above peril, but even above suspicion. As for young females *who are alone,* I think it useless to repeat that the Society does not visit them, remembering, as the Rules say, that "we have no mission with persons of the other sex, if they are young, lest we should find our own ruin, while we seek to bring salvation to others."

But in order to distribute the families as they should be, the President must, in the second place, be personally acquainted with them. For that purpose, here are two means between which he has to choose: he must either periodically, at least once a year, make a complete round of the families, or himself make the first visits in every newly admitted family. Those two modes of action, which a few Presidents have found leisure to

combine, cannot be too strongly recommended, because they secure the good direction of the Conference in that respect.

In the third place, it is quite proper not to let every member be quite free, as in some Conferences, to ask for his poor as many tickets as he may please. Otherwise, the natural tendency that inclines us to pity more the miseries directly before our eyes, the pleasure of giving our poor more assistance than before, exaggerated timidity before certain importunities, and, shall I add, a sort of secret vanity that makes us wish to favour those whom we assist; in short all those causes together would be most dangerous first to the Conference Fund, and especially to the equitable distribution of relief. When each member alone may determine the allowance of his poor, unavoidable injustice will be committed in course of time, and some will receive too much, while others have too little. It has therefore wisely been decided by some Conferences, that the amount of assistance to be granted to each case shall be determined by a committee of enquiry, composed of members *always the same*. Those members visit all the families that solicit admission, and propose to the Conference to write them down in certain categories, according to the degree of their poverty; then, once or twice a year they revise the list, in order to submit to the Conference such modifications as may seem proper. This organisation does not at all impair the liberty of action of the visitors, since they are always to be heard, and their opinion is of great weigh ; but it secures among the poor a

proportion of assistance as equitable as may be hoped for.

In the fourth place, it is greatly to be wished that the members should not themselves give to their poor, *from their own purse,* any assistance besides that coming from the Conference. Indeed, if that were allowed, families would cease to be assisted according to their real wants ; they would be assisted according to the greater compassion or fortune of the visitor. Thence would arise this serious inconvenience, that the poor would prefer certain visitors, not as more affectionate and attentive, but as more generous or more rich : thence it would become impossible for other visitors to supply the place of those who had preceded them, and to render their counsels and exhortations equally acceptable ; thence, in some Conferences where that usage prevailed, the complaints of some members asking no more to visit the poor that formerly belonged to other brothers, *because they were not rich enough.* These considerations, Sir and dear Brother, will perhaps be sufficient to recall to the common rule those among us who forget it from excess of zeal ; for they will no doubt acknowledge that, since they have united to lay their offerings together, they should not go and give each separate alms. The poor will not be the losers, I am convinced of it; for the weekly collection will necessarily be increased by the amount of those individual donations, and the common fund, a little better provided, will be able better to supply the necessities of the families.

I shall, in the fifth place, answer a question

often asked of the Council General by its correspondents: should the members who have not assisted at the meeting of the Conference, be allowed in the interval to go to the Treasurers for their tickets?

That point the Council General has always decided negatively. It does, indeed, believe that the real interests of the poor and of the Conference are both opposed to its being allowed. The interest of the poor, — for the members having no more a positive and necessary interest to come to the Conference for their tickets, would much more easily cease to attend the meetings punctually and the collection which is the clearest resource of the fund must needs suffer, *even if a money-box were placed at the Treasurer's residence,* as some have proposed.—The interest of the Conference, for by staying away very frequently, the members might lose its spirit and habits, or at least would feel less zealous as they became more estranged from the daily little affairs that compose the life of the Conferences. In this twofold respect, the facility allowed the members in this matter, would be injurious to the poor, whom some, at first sight, might fancy they are thus serving. Besides, in order to conciliate all, nothing seems better than what is practised in some Conferences. The tickets are given only at the meeting; but the members who cannot attend get theirs through a Brother member who asks for them, or write to the President in order to explain the cause of their absence. At the same time, they are careful to send in their usual offering; so that the punc-

tuality of all is stimulated, and the rule not overlooked.

Sixthly, all the members of our Society know that the principal object of our visits to the poor is to render them better, that is more christian-like, in practice as in faith. If it were not for that important aim, our visits would have, so to speak, neither object nor result. But it is not enough that religious good be done ; the Conference must, for the common edification, know that it is done ; it must be mentioned and spoken of among us, lest the new comers hearing of nothing, should neglect it. Nothing, besides, stimulates zeal so well as example, and the most powerful example is that which we meet with close to us: I shall only give as a proof the charitable life and christian energy that have always been noticed in the Conferences, in which the visitors publish the good done among their poor and through their poor; we leave the meeting with gladness and edification, we are more animated to work for the salvation of others; whilst, if we are too long silent on that capital point, some will at length believe that it is almost impossible to eradicate the vices of the poor, to kindle anew in them the light of faith: and those who believe there is nothing to be done, seldom succeed in doing anything.

Humility has, besides, nothing to suffer from such disclosures; for, in most cases, we have no agency in the changes that we witness among our poor, and we are, literally speaking, but useless servants ; it is much if we may be compared to

messengers who bear sealed letters of which they know not the secret, and whose sole merit is punctuality; for those messages entrusted to us by God, it is His grace that opens as well as sends; it is His mercy that explains them, His Holy Ghost that vivifies them. We, feeble instruments, have not to pride ourselves on the results.

We should therefore frequently speak, in the Conferences, of the religious condition of the families we visit, and principally about the time of great festivals; at Easter most especially, a general review should be made, and every visitor, *at least once a year,* should give an account of the result of his mission. If we were tempted to applaud ourselves too highly on any success obtained, that feeling would be sadly repressed by the much more numerous failures we have to lament; and our meeting will leave but the joy of having seen *a few* souls return to God, and the salutary wish to recall a much greater number to religion.

Seventhly, it will soon be two years since the Council General undertook the useful publication of the Short Readings. It has been rewarded by the religious fruits produced, and by the eagerness of most Conferences to diffuse the work: but, as there is always something left to wish for, here are two demands that the Council General desires me to transmit. The first is, that in every Conference, a member be designated to distribute the copies; the labour is slight and can be done in the Conference with the giving out of the tickets; but it must be done with order, so that the numbers be not displaced, and all the poor should re-

ceive them regularly : well, there can be order only with unity in the distribution. The second request is that we should endeavour to propagate them still more extensively. Many Conferences in France are not yet aware of their existence; others diffuse them only among their poor and in their town. It were greatly to be wished that all should follow the example of other Conferences, which through the Parish Priests, and with their concurrence, introduce those little sheets in all country villages, and spread even 10,000 copies in one district. How much good springs from them! What ignorance of religion is dispelled, how many prejudices are weakened and good counsels given! The most venerable testimonies prove it.....

I have now, Sir and dear Brother, glanced with you over many subjects, which I submit to your consideration. I shall reserve for future communications several points, which I have neglected. In closing this, allow me to express a wish :—it is that we should all, in the presence of the blessings lavished upon us by God, take a firm resolve to devote ourselves still more to the Society, to our own sanctification, to the eternal salvation and temporal welfare of our poor. The harvest is great, and we have but few labourers ; but, if we work with the toil of our hands and in the sweat of our brow, as our blessed Patron used to say, we may still reap a rich reward, and take in a rich crop for the Father. Let then none of us listen to carelessness and love of ease, that invite us to rest, and constantly repeat that we have done enough. Let us do like the reapers, who so long as an ear

of corn is standing in the field, courageously take up their sickles, and consider less the work done than what is still to be done. Let us be confident; for, if we are few and weak, we are the disciples of Him who overcame the world: *Confidite, ego vici mundum.*

Receive, Sir and dear Brother, the expression of my affectionate respect in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ad. Baudon.

Paris, 1st november 1856, feast of All Saints.

Sir and dear Brother,—

Amongst the recommendations continually made by the Council-General to the Conferences, there is one in particular that occurs more frequently than any other, which is, that their members should endeavour to become imbued with the spirit of the Rule. This idea is the groundwork of our intimate correspondence, and it recurs so frequently in our private letters, that I thought it ought to form the subject of this more general communication.

In fact, the life of a Christian work is its inviolable attachment to the idea that gave it birth, the Rule that directs it. When a Conference becomes languishing and threatens to decay, it may boldly be declared beforehand that it has departed from the Rule, either in the letter, or still worse in the spirit, and sometimes even in both. On the con-

trary, when it is prosperous, we may be equally certain that the customs and traditions of the Society are faithfully observed by it. Experience continually demonstrates this twofold truth.

Thus, as in our Conferences there is a frequent renewal of members, and as on the other hand (let us confess it at least to one another), we have examples that what has been written may be forgotten, or may not be read at all; for these reasons I propose, in this Circular, to put forward prominently the chief points that constitute the basis of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Our older Brothers will pardon the repetition, if they may prove useful to some new-comers.

But, before entering in detail into the spirit of our Rule, permit me, Sir and dear Brother, to express to you a thought, I might almost say a fear, that the text of the Rule is not sufficiently known by all our Brothers. It is in their hands, but perhaps they do not read it often enough. They indeed willingly peruse the preliminary considerations; they hear them read at the Conference, and it is a benefit, since those considerations are the useful preamble of the Rule itself. But, as to the text, it is but little thought of, and the result necessarily is, that not knowing it they more easily misinterpret the spirit and unconscientiously arrive at a false idea of the principles on which the Society reposes.

My first request is, then, that the members should read the articles of the Rule. In order to render this study less dry the Council-General has published a Commentary on each article, under

the title of *Explanatory Notes*. I could wish that this little work were in the hands of each of our Brothers.

I now come to the points which I consider the chief in our Rule.

The first that strikes me is that the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was instituted principally to improve its members. When the first Conference sprang up, it did not hope to relieve so many poor as are assisted at present; it did not flatter itself with being able to do all the good that has become possible at a later period. It wished chiefly to preserve itself in the faith, to exercise itself in piety, and to perfect itself by the example of mutual charity. Such has been the starting point: such ought to be the dominant and common thought; so far as the Conferences remain faithful to it, we can guarantee a solid duration to them. What destroys charitable societies is self-love, egotism, and the wish for display. Now, all these defects are radically at variance with the principle that I point out here: for if we enter the Conferences only for the purpose of becoming better, we cannot, without a manifest contradiction, dream by doing so of making ourselves conspicuous, of becoming vain of our membership or of making use of it as a title of honour. We come into the Society to do good purely and simply, without any reservation; to devote ourselves to it in the lowest place, if it be necessary; and to do things humble and modest, but useful to the soul by reason of this very humility and modesty. Thence, what peace and friendship must prevail in the

Society, as long as this spirit shall be in vigour? How few of those dissensions that spring from wounded self-love, and which cause so much evil to charitable societies, whenever they unfortunately come amongst them?

Thus, before everything else, we enter the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul to become more fervent Christians; and, as it has been said a thousand times, this principle casts over the progress of the Conferences a most valuable light. It points out what are the works it should undertake —they are those that tend most to this end, as the visiting of the poor. It points out at the same time those that it should avoid, as, though very useful to the poor, they might compromise this end—they are those that have for their object persons of the other sex, when they are young or in a delicate position. It explains how a Conference may be useful, even in privileged localities where works abound, because in no place are there too many means for sanctifying ourselves. It sustains in moments of difficulty, when resources are scanty, because it teaches that more value should be placed on the zeal of the members and on their cordiality and virtue, than on the funds which they administer. In short, it impresses on the Conferences the necessity of continually reanimating in themselves the spiritual life by the prayer and pious reading made seriously at the meetings; by the devout celebration of the festivals of the Society, and by the annual retreats in which the members fortify themselves in common in thoughts of faith.

In order to attain this end, the principal means made use of by our Society is charity, and I here touch on the second point that springs from the study of the Rule. And, indeed, our Society has exclusively in view that branch of charity which improves the morals of the poor, in the first place, by relieving their corporal miseries. This mission or task is already very comprehensive, it embraces a boundless multitude of details, and our Society does not intend to soar above it. Besides, it knows that what it does not do, other associations accomplish, and far from aspiring to compass all, it rejoices that in the fertile bosom of the Church, there is room for an infinite variety of works. Thus, in the same way that it leaves to the confraternities and third orders the more sublime exercises of prolonged prayer, penance, and expiation, it never descends to the ground of polemics, under any circumstances. Without trammelling the personal action of its members, but *being in no way responsible* for it, it does not go into that action, because such is not its vocation, such not its domain. It fears, in truth, what might divide its members, or break a friendship so easily kept upon the neutral ground of charity, and so difficult to maintain in matters of discussion. It urges this principle so far as never to discuss, even theoretical questions of charity, and to banish from its bosom ostentatious discourses on this point as on every other. Its mission is to act simply, limitedly if necessary, but to do as much good as possible by assisting those who suffer, by consoling those who are afflicted, by

instructing in the truths of faith those who call for this salutary teaching, and especially in preaching by example. Is it necessary to add, that, as our Rule says, and as numerous circulars repeat: « Our Society is altogether for charity, and politics are completely foreign to it? » After the long years that it has passed through since its birth, in so many different countries, and under such various circumstances, it is almost superfluous to reiterate this point, because in no place —I am justified in saying so—has the view of this fundamental principle been lost sight of. There would not have come to it from all quarters and in every country, men of station and of opinions so diversified and opposed, if they had not know beforehand, that outside the Society each one kept his own opinions, and preserved his liberty conformably to the laws and by respecting them ; but that at our meetings all those thoughts should be wholly done away with and totally set aside. Yes, thank God, our Society has not, and never should have, under pain of sinking with its own weight, any ministry, any colour, or any political tendency, even indirect and remote. Its sole motto is « God and the poor. » It formally disclaims any other.

Charity is our ground, Sir and dear Brother, and it is so rich and boundless, that it can never fail us. Let us, then, apply ourselves and labour at it with ardour. And here it is for each of our Conferences and each of us to ask ourselves if we do enough. When we recall what Saint Vincent de Paul individually has accomplished, the infinite

number of works to which he devoted himself, when, especially, we reflect on the great love he had for the poor, how completely he gave himself up to them, from morning till night, from one end of the year to the other, not for a while, but for his whole life, we cannot fail to turn back on ourselves and to admit that we do very little, that we do nothing. Let not this thought discourage us, Sir and dear Brother; may it, on the contrary, excite us to imitate more closely this admirable model! From his example, we should learn to give more to the poor, to give not only from our superfluity, but from what is comfortable and useful, and from what is necessary to us! That especially we should force ourselves to give to the poor a part of our time which is so often spent uselessly,—of our heart which too frequently we refuse them,—of our affection, to which they will sometimes be so sensible, and in fine of our prayers, to which they have a right, and the participation in which we do not perhaps think of sufficiently securing to them! Yes, I am convinced of it, and I express it energetically as I feel it, if we all meditated a few moments on these points, a salutary enthusiasm would be given to the Conferences, and without appeals to the public or extraordinary means, the amount of our receipts would increase in an unexpected manner.

But in order that charity be perfect, it is of consequence that we should ourselves put our hand to it. From our very origin, it was agreed on that we should only adopt the works we could do ourselves, because we did not wish to deprive oursel-

ves of the meritorious labours of charity. This point should be ever present to our minds, and permit me to say, that with regard to some new Conferences, it is not without utility to repeat it here. In those Conferences, which are happily very few, they bear a strong love to the poor; but they love them in an easy manner, and without putting themselves out of their way. They relieve them, but they do not visit them assiduously; they make them come to their own houses, under the pretext that the roads are long and bad, or that their occupations are absorbing. This is, Sir and dear Brother, as yet a rare abuse—thank God! but still one that I think necessary to mention, even though only dawning in the distance. If it were continued, indeed, our zeal would soon flag; we should no longer be the servants of the poor, as our holy Patron wished to be, we would become merely the purveyors of their material wants. We should allow ourselves to become idle and apathetic because that which principally nourishes devotion is the frequent use of it. Soon, I dare to say, this would be the ruin of our Society. Let us, then, proscribe everywhere this relaxing in the visiting of the poor; let us banish it even from the country districts, where they at times allege, as an excuse, the distance and custom. Do not let us even introduce the habit of visiting every fortnight as is proposed sometimes in the country districts. This would be a fatal preparatory step to the relaxing of which I complain; this would be a diminishing of the seed of charity in us: this would be a desertion of the

spirit of self-sacrifice and self-devotedness. Let us, on the contrary, imitate those good Brothers in the rural districts, who go every week, perhaps as far as two leagues, to visit the cottages of their poor, who go across boggy roads, through snow and rain as through the heat, and who, by their zeal, should make us in the towns ashamed if we were to observe less punctuality and exactness.

The third character that I remark in our Rule, Sir and dear Brother, is the profund attachment of our Conferences to the Church, and their sincere submission to the hierarchy. It has been said before, that our Society would consider itself as very happy, if its members were the most zealous parishioners in the parish, the most faithful diocesans in the diocese, and the most fervent Christians in the Church. And in truth, wherefore should our meetings be placed under the invocation and patronage of a saint; wherefore our prayers, our festivals, and our pious ceremonies, if we were not deeply devoted for the Church, if we did not desire to make it beloved and honoured, if we did not serve it as a mother and consider ourselves as the humblest of her children? This point has always been recognized amongst us as essential, and when so many bishops raise their voices to encourage us, when the Sovereign Pontiff shelters us with his solemn benediction, this can only be for each of us an exhortation to persevere in a path so fertile for our Work and so consoling to our consciences.

What shall I say now of the spirit of simplicity? Nothing is more recommended by Saint Vincent

de Paul, who wished that we should do good without evasion, without artifice, and without any vain pretension. Nothing, besides, is more pleasing or more appreciated even by the most indifferent men. Thus, let us pray God, Sid and dear Brother, that we may remain steadfast in this virtue which is the faithful companion and safeguard of humility. Let us do good for itself, and not for the honour that may revert to us from it. Let us not make it public, unnecessarily, because this would deprive us of its principal merit: or when obliged to speak of it, let us do so simply as a thing which is, in reality, merely natural. Let us especially not lavish mutual praises. In reports and discourses, les us avoid attributing to each other the little good that is done amongst us; let us beware of estimating too highly this good itself, or of considering our Works as important or worthy of attracting attention ; for otherwise we should risk the loss of the noble virtue of simplicity.

There are many other matters that should be observed here, Sir and dear Brother ; but I confine myself to reminding you of one which is particularly dear to us, it is the spirit of sweet cordiality amongst the members—cordiality, union and friendly cheerfulness. It is this that renders the Conferences vigorous, that makes their members love them, that attaches young people to them. Without those conditions, apparently secondary, a Conference may be very numerous, rich, and even zealous and charitable, but the principal element of duration wil be found missing. It will be like

an edifice in which the cement, which should unite the stones, would be wanting. I call your whole attention to this subject, and think it useful to enter into some practical details relative to it.

1. In order to maintain cordiality, it is necessary that, when a member first enters a Conference, the President should form a more intimate acquaintance with him than that of a mere hurried introduction at the meeting; it is necessary also that this member should be made known to the other members of the Conference. In some Conferences, where the roll is numerous, the new members enter, and one may say that they are unknown, their neighbours not having been made aware of their names. This is a very great evil, because those members do not become in any way attached to their Conference. They are isolated and unknown in it; they, perhaps, fancy that no one cares for them, and too frequently retire from the work through disgust and *ennui*. I therefore entreat the President and all the Brothers to watch over this point.

2. It is very important that the festivals of the Society should be punctually observed. It is at those pious meetings that the members are more intimately drawn together because they become mutually attached by the bond of prayer. A Conference that assists regularly at the festivals pointed out by the Rule, and that never fails to be at the Masses for the Brothers, and for the deceased poor, such a Conference, I say, is necessarily very united and friendly; for it draws unity and good

feeling from the divine source of all peace and true friendship.

2. A certain number of Conferences are accustomed to have pious pilgrimages, to which they repair each year in common. This custom so useful to faith, is also conducive to cordiality. In making the journey, the members become acquainted and bound together. They can speak with open hearts, which would be impossible during, and scarcely less so, after the meeting. Wherever this practice has prevailed, our Brothers mention the best results. They return more attached to each other, better friends, and consequently more disposed to revisit their Conference with punctuality. Let us hope that those pilgrimages will become general. There are very few towns near which there are not ancient pilgrimages, or ones still subsisting—abbeys or places sanctified by the presence of the saints. Would it not be a joy for our Society to associate itself in those practices where they exist, or to revive them where they have ceased? Would it not be for it a double benediction?

Such are, Sir and dear Brother, the matters that I consider as essential in our Rule, and which I point out for your consideration. I confess that I attach more importance to them than to the financial resources, or material conditions which, however, I am far from disdaining; for, if we are truly charitable and truly Christian, we shall do considerable good to the poor. More than ever do the poor attach importance to the affection with which they are treated; more than ever are

they inclined to scrutinize the manner in which the good is done to them, rather than the gift itself. The benefit appears too frequently to them as the discharging of a debt ; but the affability and kind attention, with which the gift is accompanied, always awakens their gratitude in the highest degree. Consequently let us ourselves cling to those virtues : we shall thus give joy to the heart of our holy Patron, and we shall walk in the track of his virtue.

Receive, Sir and dear Brother, the expression of my sincere and affectionate devotion in our Lord.

Ad. Baudon.

Paris, november 1st 1858.
feast of All Saints.

Sir and dear Brother,—

Our Society continues to be developed, as you may perceive by the general report which has just been concluded, and by the monthly accounts of the *Bulletin*. We should fervently thank God for this, because there is reason to hope, that such an increase of the Conferences will facilitate greater assistance for our dear poor, and will tend to rekindle the zeal of Christians by the sweet exercise of charity. But, in order that this increase of the number of our Conferences may afford us unalloyed joy, it is necessary that the new as well as the old Conferences, should continue to be

thoroughly penetrated with the spirit of our Society, and it is on this very serious subject that I wish to address you.

In considering the few thoughts which we may mutually have on this subject, it seems to me, Sir and dear Brother, that two words sum up the duties of our members, and I shall designate them thus :—*to give and to act.*

To give, in the first instance, our money, then our time and heart; *to act*, that is to say, to busy ourselves ardently and unceasingly with the interests of the poor; not to be contented with the little that has been done, but to seek to do more every day for the material relief of those who suffer, and especially for their religious improvement; in fact, is not this the whole business of our Brothers; is it not the double condition of the life, duration, and extension of our dear Society? Let us therefore enter a little further into this twofold thought: perhaps some practical results may proceed from it.

And first, our primary duty in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is *to give*. Its members are not the more or less zealous and intelligent distributors of the alms of the public; they are before all else called themselves to give from their own purse, from their savings and superfluity: and what they receive from without should, in their mind, be only a precarious and accidental resource, and on which, consequently, they should never reckon.

Now, do we accomplish this duty everywhere, do we accomplish it always? Are the offerings,

that we put into the treasury of the Conferences every week, proportioned to the resources which Providence has bestowed upon us, or rather are they not measured out with too much parsimony? Here, Sir and dear Brother, I do not wish to set myself up as judge, nor especially as censor of any Conference—but, I question, I interrogate, and I appeal to the conscience of each ; I ask them to cast their eyes over the accounts for the end of the year, such as they are, sent to us for the Annual Report, to see what is the total of their receipts, and in what ratio the offerings of the members stand to this total. If large, proportioned to the fortune and position of the members, let them congratulate themselves ; but if, as I have reason to fear, the answer is not everywhere so satisfactory, let the Conferences, liable to this reproach form the generous resolution to amend and do better for the future.

On this subject, the Council-General has sometimes been asked if they would think well of fixing for each member a minimum, that he should give at the collection. The Council-General has been unable to do this for two reasons : first, because the offerings should be always spontaneous and free, amongst the active members ; secondly because it would be impossible to fix this minimum ; for, what would be insufficient for a rich town would be exorbitant for a village, or a poor country.

But if the Council-General has not been able to lay down for all a minimum—a proportion to give at the weekly collection—nothing is more

desirable or easy than for each of us, himself, to fix the minimum that he can give, and to weigh it in presence of his conscience and of God. Besides, if we possess the spirit of charity, is it not highly probable that we shall make the share of the poor larger than any one would have dared to do for us ?

And, indeed, when being alone with God, we reflect on the use we make of our means, whether considerable or moderate, on the expenses which we incur for our pleasure or for charity, for our whims or our alms, for our table, furniture, clothes or for our Works, we can be more severe on ourselves than any one would dream of being on us; and, consequently, we can offer to the poor much more than the most insatiable collector would have dared to ask from us.

You perhaps remember, Sir and dear Brother, the reasoning of one of our good Brothers of a rural German Conference, on this point. He asked himself if he was giving sufficiently to the poor, and, at first he answered that he was doing everything that was possible. However, as he ardently wished to be able to give more, he did not content himself with his first answer, and he again examined in what item of his household he could save. Suddenly a most simple but excellent idea occurred to him, " I smoke," said he, " and I expend daily two pence for my tobacco. Well ! we can live without that, whilst the poor cannot live without bread. I shall therefore smoke no more, and I shall deposit my two pence per day in the treasury of the Conference. "

This sacrifice was generous, Sir and dear Brother, but who would have dared to demand it? Our Brother imposed it on himself, however; his health was nothing the worse for it, and the Conference purse was much improved. Now, if every one would scrutinize his life; if he would place in the balance, on one side the budget of his whims, amusements and luxury, and on the other side that of charity; and if he did with these superfluous expenses what our German Brother did with his inveterate habit of smoking, to what a sum would not the collections of the Conferences amount, and how much would there not accrue to the budget of the poor? I therefore invite all our Brothers, Sir and dear Brother, to this voluntary but serious examination. I trust that it will be fruitful, and that the treasurers of our Conferences will approve of it.

To give his money, such is the first duty of a disciple of Saint Vincent de Paul; but that is not enough, he must also give his time; and there perhaps I have again a few wishes to express. If, indeed, I am to believe the complaints of certain Presidents, the heaviest portion of the burden of the Works falls on a small number of members, always the same; and still, these indefatigable members, whom we find constantly in the breach, are, with few exceptions, men occupied elsewhere, and finding time for charity only by a kind of perpetual energy, and knowing how, by dint of activity, to employ their every moment with willingness. On the other hand these Presidents add that the members who have leisure are not wan-

ting, but are far from being the most punctual ; that they are frequently absent from the meetings, absorbed as they are by worldly ties and social duties more or less real, and that consequently they abstain from taking part in works, ever so little binding, such as the Patronages, Holy Families, economical ovens, and Libraries.

Here again, Sir and dear Brother, I shall be careful not to blame any one, and I shall confine myself to begging of each person to continue the examination of his time which I have advised on the employment of his money. It is certain that if much money is badly employed, much more time is also uselessly expended, without any serious object, and frequently without even enjoyment. There would be, on the contrary, so much good to be done, by joining together these hours, days, weeks, and even years, lost perhaps in fruitless idleness. With this time, thus wantonly squandered away, they could create or sustain so many works, otherwise totally impossible ; they could instruct so many ignorant persons, and could perhaps convert so many sinners ! The subject is a grave one, and deserves reflection from all of us, were it only to quiet our conscience and lessen responsibility before God.

In short, in order that this gift of ourselves may be complete, we must add to it that of our heart. Here, Sir and dear Brother, I cannot give you a better example amongst men than that of our holy patron, the Blessed Vincent de Paul. Read His touching life, meditate on it with the attention which it deserves, and you certainly will admire

the treasures of devotion and true charity which it contains. Saint Vincent de Paul did not assist the poor with a cold compassion for their miseries; he relieved them because he loved them in the depths of his heart: he could not witness their troubles without being affected at them, nor their tears, without mingling his own with theirs. How he suffered when he could not relieve their miseries, and how he rejoiced when he obtained abundant succour for them! How he stripped himself, how he impoverished his community, in order to procure assistance for them! How he knew how to overcome his timidity for the purpose of supplicating the rich and powerful in their favour! Let us study this sublime life, and we shall become quite inflamed with love for the poor; we shall give them not only our time and money, but our hearts likewise.

Besides, at what period was this gift of ourselves more necessary than at present? Unfortunately the poor very frequently set very little value on the alms which we give, and consider it in itself as a debt; it is always too trifling for their wants, and they hardly feel grateful for it. But that which touches them—that which, we must hope will ever touch them—is the affability with which the gift is carried to them, the delicacy of conduct and the manifestation of feeling. By this token, they feel that they are loved truly; they bestow themselves in return, they show that they are disposed to listen to the advice that may be given them, and, consequently, they think of reforming their morals and conduct. If, therefore, we wish to

gain really the affection of our poor people for the purpose of improving them, let us give them our heart; let us visit them, not with coldness or indifference, but with that effusion which Saint Vincent de Paul testified to them, and which issued from a love drawn from the heart of Jesus Christ Himself.

To *give ourselves* to the poor, under all the forms that I have just pointed out to you, such is, Sir and dear Brother, the first word that sums up the duties of a member of our Conferences. I shall pass on to the second word which I mentioned to you just now, and I am about to see with you how we should *act*.

First, is it necessary that I should mention what is the sphere in which our Conferences and Brothers, as brothers, should act? It seems to me that, whenever we can refer to circulars and to the preliminary considerations of our Rule, it is superfluous to enter into long explanations.

"Our Society," says the Rule, "is all Charity; politics are foreign to it." Another circular mentions that "we should never lend our assistance, as Conferences, to the editing of political Journals; and the Council-General, the guardian of the interest and principles of our Society, has ever carefully maintained the Conferences in this path of ministrations purely and exclusively charitable."

When, therefore, I speak of the necessity of *acting*, it is only in the sense of ministrations in the works of charity; this is too elementary to be discussed amongst us. But this definition once given, or rather repeated, I shall entreat the Con-

ferences and their members to act, to act incessantly, and to act with all the energy of their zeal and charity.

This thought indeed, ought to occupy the Conferences seriously, and they should, through their Presidents and Secretaries at the General Meetings, ask themselves if they act and if they do anything. Doubtless, it is praiseworthy to visit some poor persons, but is that sufficient? Could we not frequently relieve more, if we were more zealous? Could we not add some families to the very short list of the Conference? I am convinced of this, Sir and dear Brother, with regard to several Conferences; and I should be very happy if these lines, which I address to all, could rouse those members of our family, of whom it may be said with the Apostle, *dormiunt multi*. Then, if we visit a sufficient number of the poor, do we busy ourselves about taking the proper measures to render these visits fruitful and more complete? When we gather together at meetings, do we think of aught but the distribution of bread and meat tickets in proportion to the miseries of the poor, or do we go beyond this solicitude, which is certainly most praiseworthy, but incomplete? Do we occupy ourselves with making the children go to catechism or to school, or in giving to the parents good books, which turn them from bad ones, and instruct them in the truths of the faith? Do we seek to make the poor advance in good conduct, morality, and religion? In a material point of view, if any steps be requisite to place a person in a situation, to find employment for a workman,

do we take sufficient trouble ? In a word, do we act with that enthusiasm which charity bestows ? This is, Sir and dear Brother, a first subject of reflection.

And again, in the large cities, in which we count so many Conferences, there are immense populations, who, absorbed by the labors of industry, are without any practical religion and even without faith. With them marriage is not blessed by the church—the first communion is either not made, or made without preparation; and baptism is sometimes not given to children. If we merely follow the usual routine, we shall think but little of these populations, the access to whom is so difficult, whose morals are often so depraved, but whom for this reason we should love more in Jesus Christ than the others, because they are more disinherited. Let us therefore go to them—undoubtedly with prudence and precaution, providing ourselves with the necessary information—but let us go to them with courage. These souls, however abandoned they may be, are not the less redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and if we can save only a few of them, we should consider ourselves well rewarded by God.

We must therefore act in this direction, by interesting ourselves not only in the ordinary poor, but especially in those who are disinherited from the faith; moreover, we must also act in many other ways. Thus, our Conference confines itself perhaps only to visiting the poor; up to this time it has not thought of any other Work. Let us study the accounts of the *Bulletin,* the history of

the Works contained in the Manual, and let us see what is practicable for our Conference. If the patronage be too difficult, if the Holy Family be too complicated, let us then form a library. If the taste for reading be not very much diffused amongst the people, let us at least give books of instruction and piety, and books for Mass. If, on the contrary, they are a reading people, and if the readings are only too frequently unchristian, let us endeavour to distribute, besides Christian *Almanachs* and *Short Readings,* those numerous books of amusement which the *Bulletin* recommends from time to time, and which it would be well to place in the hands of persons who have a taste for reading. In a word, under one form or other, let us try to increase the sphere of activity of our Conference, and not allow it to languish.

I do not wish to dwell too long on this point Sir and dear Brother. I shall merely confine myself to the remark that if each member tried to *act* as much as possible, and to effect around him all the good that he was capable of, it would be an incalculable benefit, which would make our holy Patron rejoice, and would draw down on our dear Society the most abundant benedictions of God. Let us, therefore, endeavour to deserve these benedictions, and we shall be rewarded by the joy of our conscience.

I shall conclude this letter, Sir and dear Brother, by a point of detail, which must be of wide-spread importance ; I mean the diffusion of the *Bulletin* and the *Manual of the Society.*

You know why the *Bulletin* was undertaken; it

was for the purpose of supplying the Conferences with news of each other, and of collecting in a monthly account, the most instructive and interesting facts contained in each report ; il was also for the purpose of keeping up the common spirit of the Society by advice which recall and explain our traditions. The *Manual,* now forming two parts which may be separated at will, contains, besides the Rules explained, Briefs of Indulgences granted to the Society, Instructions for the formation of Conferences, Prayers for the use of the Society and particularly the Offices of Saint Vincent de Paul. There are also to be found in it extracts from the principal circulars of the Presidents-General, and the history of the Society.

The *Bulletin* and the *Manual* are, consequently, two works most essential to the Conferences and their members. It is important that they should read and consult them. It is necessary for the old members, in order that they may not forget the spirit of the Society, and it is necessary for the new members, that they may learn to know them. And still the Council-General remarks that the diffusion of the *Bulletin* and the *Manual* is not in proportion to the increase of the Conferences ; there are even some where they are unknown, and there must result from this a slackening of zeal, and in the long run a deviation from the spirit and traditions of our Society. I call your whole attention to this point, in order that in each Conference the Bulletin may be read, at least the part containing the general recommendation ; that those of the members who can do so may

subscribe to it ; and that the Manual, or at least the first portion of it, may be in the hands of all our Brothers.

. . . . . .

Be assured, etc.

AD. BAUDON.

Paris, nov. 1st 1860, Feast of All Saints.

Sir and dear Brother,

According to an old custom amongst us, I am about to speak with you of the interests of our dear Society. Such communications you have been accustomed to receive at this period of the year, and I think they should be continued. For whilst the sending of the statistics makes known to the Council the good accomplished in each portion of our work, and places it in intimate relation with each Conference by making it participate in its charitable life, the annual circular of the Council reports to the Conferences the fruit and results of that labor, and the reflections it has given rise to. It is thus that by the sole bond of cordiality, persuasion, and good example, this unity of thoughts and views is maintained, which constitutes the greatest charm of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

The General report, which has already appeared in the *Bulletin*, gives you the epitome of our

principal works, and the table of their moral and material progress ; thus I shall not dwell on this point, but, I think, it may be useful to all to explain candidly certain general results that have struck the Council whilst making this study, and to mention to you the weak points that have appeared to us. It is not, indeed, for the purpose of addressing fruitless eulogies to each other, that we should correspond, but to learn to do more, and do it better.

Doubtless, if I consider our works collectively, my first impulse would be that of great gratitude for the goodness of God, who has permitted us to accomplish them. I cannot prevent myself from blessing God, because by the means of our *Little Society*, as Saint Vincent de Paul would have said, he has fed so many starving wretched ones ; warmed so many poor, suffering from cold ; clothed so many naked ; instructed such a number of the ignorant, and directed in the paths of morality and religion so many children abandoned to themselves, and who, perhaps without the assistance given them, should have been lost in this life and the next. I especially rejoice that, owing to our Conferences, a crowd of young people, who otherwise would have forgotten their faith, preserve, purify, and consolidate it in the practice of charity, and that by this completely providential means piety is rekindled in the hearts of Christians who are, without doubt, sincere, but perhaps somewaht too little occupied with the practices of faith and piety. Yes, all these are the thoughts that crowd in on my soul when I read

the annual accounts of our works, and they increase the affection and love which I bear to our Society quite as much as I know they increase them in your hearts also ; and I should think myself failing in gratitude to God if I did not, in the first instance, express here this burst of my profound thankfulness !

But if, leaving aside the general results of our charitable ministry, I inter into detail, if, particularly, instead of viewing them collectively as they come from God, I examine the carrying of them out which rests with us, and which consequently is so imperfect, it appears to me from all the evidence that we have much progress to effect and many points to reform. Let us make this study together, Sir and dear Brother, in order to draw from it some useful results for the support and developement of our dear Conferences.

And in the first place, in order to take but one material fact referring to the scale of our weekly collections, thas is—the amount of personal sacrifices which we make in favor of our poor—is it sufficient ? Many Brothers, I know, are extremely generous ; many Conferences in this respect give excellent example ; but in short without judging anyone, do we ourselves do all that we can ? Whatever reserve I ought to have in this case, I cannot restrain myself from saying, that in this respect we have immense progress to realize ; thus in a great number of Conferences in rich towns, and where, consequently, the members are in easy circumstances, the amount of the weekly

collections does not exceed twenty francs each member, for the entire year. Sometimes even this scale is as low as fifteen or ten francs each member.

Now, in good faith, is twenty francs a year sufficient for our charity? if we only sacrifice this minimum sum *in a whole year* for our Conference, can we say that we love it or care for its prosperity? If this is what we throw into the bosom of the poor, can we say that we apply the precept of alms, that we are the disciples of Jesus Christ, and the imitators of Saint Vincent de Paul? Be it understood that I do not judge anybody; on the contrary I know that there is amongst us a very great diversity of position, and that for some of our Brothers an alms of twenty francs is a blessed mite of the widow. But beside those members who are less favored by fortune, how many are there not who could considerably increase their alms? Let us calculate coolly what we expend on our pleasures and our charity; travelling, hunting, luxuries at the table and the furnishing of our houses, and the sacrifices we make in favor of the poor, and we shall certainly conclude that we always give the larger part for our pleasures, whilst we are continually retrenching towards the poor and God.

This subject has been frequently discussed between us, Sir and dear Brother; but, at the risk of falling into tiresome repetition, I think it well to revert to, and dwell on it, for in this especially there is question of the life and future of our Conferences. If their members are generous to the

poor, if they give abundant alms at the collection, they will most certainly preserve, by virtue of this sacrifice, the zeal, devotion, and enthusiasm which constitute the life of a work. If, on the contrary, they give but little, and much beneath their means, they will by degrees feel their love for the poor becoming cold and their hearts dried up towards them ; consequently the works will seem to them more painful and exacting, and they will no longer perform them but with that carelessness which paralyses everything, if they do not altogether abandon them.

You see then, Sir and dear Brother, that this point is of the greatest importance ; one could almost say with justice, " tell me the amount of the Conference collection, and I shall tell you its zeal : " for when we give our money, not occasionally, or not by chance, but perseveringly, it shows we are ready to give ourselves, if we have not already done so.

But in another point of view, these impulses of personal generosity are of much consequence to the future of our Society. For several years it has received much from external resources ; by lotteries, sales, bazaars and subscriptions, it obtains from the charitable public means that enable it to visit many poor persons and do many very useful works. But these resources are precarious, they depend very much on exterior circumstances and, for certain reasons, it is to be feared that we may lose them, were it only on account of the immense number of demands made on the public, and the weariness of the subscribers. What

then would become of our families ; what would become of so many poor, who are accustomed to our assistance, and whom for want of money we should abandon ? What should become of so many accessory works which effect a real good, and which we should give up ? Let us not expose ourselves to this danger, Sir and dear Brother ; and, without totally rejecting assistance from without, as long as we procure it let us not look upon it as the foundation of our resources ; let us rather count on that which cannot fail us if we wish ; that is, our personal charity and the efforts of our own purses.

I hope, therefore, that the result of these reflections, Sir and dear Brother, will be, to cause the scale of the weekly collections to increase everywhere in a sensible manner, that where little has been given they will make a generous effort, really proportioned to their personal resources ; and, that where they have already given largely, they will still progress. For however great it may be, our charity will be still very far, not only from that of Saint Vincent de Paul, but even from that of fervent persons whom he directed, and whom he has left as models to us of Christians living in the world.

I shall conclude this point and pass on to another remark which is in some degree connected with the former, and which the examination of the statistics sent to the Council-General has suggested to me. If our collections are small, is not one of the causes of it the facility with which certain members exempt themselves from attendance at

their Conferences ; and I am the more induced to think so, because in the Conferences where the scale of the collections is lowest, we generally see works languish, very few poor visited, and these not attentively. Let us sound the real cause of this evil.

I know—and I never wish to exaggerate anything in the duties of my Brothers—it is impossible that in a society of people living in the world there should not be, notwithstanding the greatest willingness, more or less frequent absences. Here there are journeys ; there imperative family or business duties, which occur suddenly ; besides, in many cities, and particularly in the country districts, there are members, and they are generally the richest and with most time at their command, who go away regularly, and for rather a long period, from their Conferences. I can understand all this, and I make as great allowance for it as may be necessary, the more so that certain zealous members do not for a moment quit their Conference but to attend another. But besides these necessary absences, are there not others that are completely voluntary, and have for their true origin, not occupations that cannot be set aside, nor family duties that could not otherwise be performed, but a certain indolence and lamentable tepidity for the works of the Society? They say to themselves, more or less explicitly, here, now, for a long time I have been doing the same thing, two, three, or perhaps twenty years, and in the end it is monotonous. Always visiting the poor, who do not give you the

satisfaction of profiting by your advice, who always continue idle, inert, and consequently more or less unfortunate through their own fault, and who, despite every effort, persist in a deplorable religious indifference, and do no bring up their children better than they would have done without our visits. Is it not fatiguing, they say, to perform these same works over and over again, and where the consolations are so few ? Are not these Conference Meetings equally so which commence and finish always in the same way ; where such trifling and minute things are discussed in presence of the great events that are agitating the world, and where, in order to be faithful to the rule, even an allusion to the religious questions that occupy Catholics so much must be avoided ? Perhaps they do not confess these things to themselves, still less utter them, but do they not feel the taint of them in their hearts, and are they not the source of those absences that afflict the Presidents, impoverish the treasury, and necessarily diminish the works accomplished for the interests of the poor ?

Ah ! if it were thus, Sir and dear Brother, I could not make too urgent an appeal to your zeal to draw from their error those of our Brothers who should be given up to these fatal thoughts. Doubtless we are always engaged in the same works ; we do not leave the course rigorously marked out by our rule, which interdicts any other ministry than that of practical charity. Doubtless in one sense it is monotonous, but it is so in the right sense of the word, as the upright

and pure life of the Christian, and the accomplishment of those simple but highly meritorious duties which in families and private life constitute the good father, the good husband, and the good citizen—it is monotonous, like the acts of the Christian life, like our morning and evening prayers, like the offices of the Church, and like her ceremonies, which are ever the same, and do not change at the will of innovators, but are not the less beautiful, nor less capable of nourishing the soul. This monotony is that of good, that of simple but practical virtue, and if we begin to find it burthensome, it is because we feel our zeal cooling towards our poor and our Work, and what is still more serious, towards God and his Church.

If, therefore, this thought has arisen within us, let us drive it away from our souls, as a dangerous one, or rather let us raise our hearts on high and reflect. At the beginning of this letter, I rejoiced with you at the long enumeration of works which the General Report mentions to us every year — but is it not something grand and noble to co-operate in it, even in a small and trifling degree? If our Society should wear out, if her alms should become dried up, would there not be a sad and lamentable deficiency in the resources of the poor? Whould there not be many mothers who would groan to see their children without food or clothes? Would there not be a greater number of men and women who would be less instructed in their religion, and who would never more hear it spoken of? Would not the

curse of unions without marriage, children without baptism or first communion increase, and would it not become sadly extended? And we ourselves deprived of our prayers in common, our pious lectures, the edification of our common feasts, and of the humble but useful practice of charity, would we not feel our zeal and charity becoming cold? Oh! Sir and dear Brother, reflections crowd in on my mind, as they doubtless do on yours, and if this temptation of discouragement has occurred to any of the members of your Conference, I am confident that you will know how to conquer it, by representing to him the reality of the good done by our Conferences, and by showing to him what a misfortune it would truly be, to see them become relaxed and cold.

Thus I hope that, filled with renewed zeal, we are all going to return to our work, and that we shall bring to it all the joy and ardour of our commencement and our early days : and that not content with returning assiduously to it ourselves, we shall say to our friends and to those who do not know our Work and might take part in it : "Come with us to the poor ; come and see how good it is, and how soothing to the heart. Charity is an enjoyment that never causes remorse, for even where it does not fully attain its object, through the fault of those towards whom it is exercised, it leaves behind in the satisfaction always felt from having accomplished a duty."

A third remark, which the study of the statistical tables suggests to me, is, that in certain Con-

ferences, works having for their object the religious instruction of the poor are not sufficiently attended to. It is true that we should devote ourselves to the temporal wants of those whom we visit, and that we should prevent the suffering members of our Lord Jesus Christ from enduring the miseries of hunger, nakedness, and cold. It is true also that in going to visit our poor at their homes, and that in sitting down at their hearths, in bringing them the bread or meat ticket which they require, we can and ought to bring them the all-important alms of good advice, religious truth, and love for Jesus Christ: but all this ought not to turn us from the works that have for their direct aim the religious instruction of the poor, such as the patronage of apprentices, the holy families, libraries, etc., etc. Besides, all these, when well understood, are a mutual support and bond, instead of an injury to each other, as has frequently been observed. When we visit the poor man, as Saint Vincent de Paul did, that is to say, with a tender affection for both his body and soul, we feel the necessity of watching over his child, in order to see if he go to a good school, and, when apprenticed, if he go to a house of patronage; we invite him to participate in the meetings of the holy families, which are so touching to him; we take care that he has in his dwelling the books that are essential for all Christians—the prayers for mass, the Gospels, and some elementary treatises on the principal truths of faith...

These accessory works are, therefore, only the completion and prolonging of the visiting at the

home of the poor—well made. Now, perhaps, in some Conferences they do not sufficiently occupy themselves about this. If I credit the statistics, they are generous almost exclusively about the bread, meat, wood, and clothes, which, no doubt, are excellent things ; but they are too niggardly about the moral wants, which are, however, so great in the majority of these poor families. We hardly leave an *Almanac* or a *Short Reading* there during the year, and we do not dream of giving them the sacred image of Our Blessed Lord, that of the holy Virgin, the Mother of the afflicted, or that of Saint Vincent de Paul, the friend and patron of the poor ; and again, we draw back before the expense of a *Christian's Day,* the *Manual of Workmen,* or the *Mother of a Family,* and we are not uneasy lest these poor souls remain all their lives without the spiritual food that is necessary for them.

On this point, Sir and dear Brother, the examination which you and I have just made together will, therefore, be useful, if the Conferences that are a little in arrear will redeem lost time by the distribution of good books judiciously chosen and appropriate to the wants of each family ; if they increase their libraries, in order to have the instructive book preceded or followed by the book of harmless recreation. Let us have pity on the souls that are going to destruction, and far from the path of salvation. There are so many who are strangers to every Christian idea and every religious occupation, that we should not regret any sacrifice to diminish their number. I here

limit, Sir and dear Brother, the reflections suggested to me, as well as to the Council-General, by the reading of the statistics. I should feel very happy if they were understood by all, and seriously applied ; for if these points are not numerous, they are nevertheless important. I now conclude by stating the wishes which I feel for our Society at the moment in which the present year is about to close, and we are going to enter upon a new one.

Saint Vincent de Paul did not care that his missionaries should have much money: when it came to them he thanked Divine Providence for it, but he did not seek it eagerly. What he wished them to possess was the spirit of zeal, with which a Christian is ever rich — the spirit of poverty, in virtue of which the poor disciple of the Man-God always knows how to live without sadness, contenting himself with the daily gifts of God — the spirit of disinterestedness and self-denial, by which, instead of seeking the satisfaction of his self-love, or the honor of his own congregation, he only seeks the exclusive glory of God ; and it is by diffusing this spirit that he has fixed his works on such an immovable basis.

And as for myself, after the example of this admirable model, I shall not wish to your Conference much gold, which would, perhaps, cause it to forget the spirit of humility and self-sacrifice. I shall not wish it brilliant works, which might attract to it the admiration of men ; I shall only ask from God, that he may preserve in it the spirit of rectitude and frank simplicity, and the zeal that

have ever characterised it. That it may serve the poor lovingly, that it may devote itself to them, that it may give its heart, time, and trifling resources to them ; that in acting thus, it may think only of God and not of itself, of the greatest possible good that it can do, and not of the honor that would accrue from men, and I shall bless the Lord for the benefits that he shall have granted to us.

Receive, etc.

AD. BAUDON.

Paris, 1st january 1877.

Sir and dear Brother,

It is laid down in our Rule, and it has been always understood amongst us, that in uniting together to serve our masters the poor, as Saint Vincent de Paul expresses it, our object is not only to assuage material misery, a very laudable purpose in itself, but to aspire above all, through the practice of the most sublime of virtues — Charity — to render ourselves better and more fervent Christians, and to make our poor enter on the same path, if we have the happiness of thriving in it.

Now, how can this two-fold object be attained, unless by raising the spiritual level in our Conferences, that is, by increasing our faith, our pious sentiments, and thereby approximating the ideal

presented to us by all the Saints honoured by the Church, and especially by our holy Patron ?

All exercise of piety, it is true, is free and optional ; nothing is done through constraint, even through spiritual constraint, if I may use that term, for there exists no vow or conscientious obligation. Our Society imposes on us no duty, no practice, beyond that prescribed by the Church ; but through the beneficent virtue of example, through the happy contagion of good, it is beyond all doubt, that it possesses a real efficacy in advancing us in the ways of Christian perfection.

Let us just reflect on what takes places in our Conferences. In holding their meetings it might not have appeared evidently, *necessary* even to Christians, to open them by prayer. Many Christian assemblies do not employ it ; and, ad the outset of our Work, very few followed that practice. And yet, our Rule prescribes that our meetings are to be opened by prayer, a short, it is true, but fervent prayer, and this direction alone affixes a quite special and Christian stamp to our sittings.

After the prayer comes a pious lecture ; and here our Work leads us to take a more decisive step in Christian exercices. Nothing is more recommended by the most approved writers in the Church than pious reading : there is nothing more necessary to maintain faith, to enkindle fervour, to banish thoughts of discouragement, to dissipate doubts, alas ! so common in our days of indifference and impiety, and unfortunately there is nothing more neglected by many, even very sin-

cere Christians. There his nothing from which exemption is more frequently claimed on the most frivolous pretexts, and the practice of, we are bound to confess, is more lost sight of in our time. In requiring this lecture, so short but so useful, our Rule causes us to adopt one of the most certain regulations of the Christian life, and, it is to be hoped, that many amongst us, not to say all, after having seriously listened to the pious lecture at the Conference, will, in consequence, take up the laudable practice in private, and perhaps spread it in their families.

Thus again, all our brothers are regular Christians, who perform their Paschal duty with exactness and faith. But without imposing anything additional, our Society proposes more to its members. By the four Masses it causes to be celebrated every year, to which the liberality of the Sovereign Pontiffs has attached plenary indulgences on various conditions, but especially on that of Communion, the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul accustom their members to come closer to that burning fire, the Eucharist, from which no one ever keeps away without enfeebling his spiritual strength and love for God. Hence, every zealous Conference must, I am sure, be rejoiced to have members, who, before joining its ranks, carried out the strict rule of Paschal Communion, but who now receive the sacred body of our Lord on the feasts of the Society at least, and perhaps on all the great festivals of the Church; and, it is beyond doubt, that other members, more anxious to follow thoroughly the promptings of their zeal,

arrive at the practice of frequent, if not daily, communion.

And finally, are there not in the world many men exact in the most indispensable observances, but, who are seldom present at a sermon, and are completely deprived of the grace of Retreats? Again our Society does not impose this practice as an obligation; but to how many of its members has it not rendered it familiar through the Annual Retreats to which it invites us, and which ought to be for us an occasion for renewing christian life?

Our Society has therefore done much — and this is one of the reasons that should render it more dear to us — to develop in us the practical spirit of devotion.

Now, what happens? In becoming more fervent in the pursuit of pious exercises, have we deserted the service of the poor? No, no, quite the contrary; it is a matter of fact that such of our members as are most assiduous in prayer, in approaching the Holy Table, are the most earnest in visiting their poor, in devoting attention to their Apprentices, and in attending to the Holy Families. The fire of the love of God which burns in their hearts, and which they labour to keep always alive there, far from turning them away from the common and material cares to be expended on the sick and poor, causes these cares to be more ardently loved by them, because they discern, under the rude and frequently repulsive exterior of the needy, the suffering member of Jesus Christ.

And as to the souls which these poor bodies cover, and which are, for the most part, afflicted

by so many diseases, how they love and esteem them? How they find in their defects, in their vices, in their defilement, a fresh occasion for devoting themselves to them, for labouring to heal them, to regenerate them! Some one says to them, these men, these women, these children are poor through their own fault, attempts have been often and often made to draw them from their misery, and they have invariably fallen into it again; but this does not dishearten them, and they try again, once, ten times, or a hundred times, and they sometimes accompany the measures they take with so many good wishes, so many prayers, so many acts of penance, that they succeed where others have failed, and have the satisfaction of bringing back to the fold of the Divine Master, the stray sheep which up to then were regarded as lost.

Hence the raising of the christian level in our Conferences is a fact at which we must rejoice, whenever it presents itself to us, and one for which we should incessantly labour, for we may be quite sure that those Conferences in which it firmly establishes itself will be really active through the zeal of their members, very peaceable, very united, very enterprising, in founding useful Works, and we may count on the fresh arrival of members to throng their meetings, on the receipt of funds to make up their deficits, on special graces to dissipate their difficulties for the blessing of God,—that source of all fruitfulness—shall be upon them.

But how shall we contribute towards this

raising of the christian level in our Society? Will it be effected through the multiplication of our pious exercises, by new forms of procedure to be adopted in our Conferences? We ought, in my opinion, to be on our guard against such ideas, and far from altering in our body, what has been attended with great success we have but one thing to do, that is, to preserve in all simplicity what we have done, and what our rule recommends, but to endeavour to carry it out with more care and punctuality.

Thus, we need not add to the length of our prayers, at the beginning and close of our meetings; we do not require to devote more time to our pious lectures; let us only try to be more exact than heretofore, perhaps, in these exercises. If we have been in the unfortunate habit of arriving at the meeting when prayer and lecture are over, let us make an effort to be as ponctual as possible in future, and above all, not to leave before the concluding prayer, as is sometimes done by some not over scrupulous members, who attend the meeting merely for the purpose of getting their orders, and who take their departure immediately afterwards.

If the lecture is gone through in a somewhat routine fashion, let us direct our energies to the correction of this fault, and, to effect it, let us endeavour to render the lecture more interesting, by varying the subject of it, by selecting it from new books, or by taking from among the chief christian publications, and especially those of the Society, such passages as are best suited to the wants

of the Conference. Let us seek, once the reading is over, and if the meeting have not too much business on hands, to make a *résumé* of the most salient points, in order to see whether some useful application may not be made of them; for all this will be a source of activity for the meetings, of interest as regards the poor, and of progress towards good.

And again, Sir and dear Brother, I do not in the least intend to ask that the number of the Feasts of the Society, of the Masses to which it invites us, or of the Retreats which it opens to us, should be increased; though, of course, my desire would be to see these common throughout all the Conferences. What I venture to request, as a progressive step very desirable from many points of view, is, that the Masses of the Society and the General Meetings, which follow them should be attended as matters of serious importance. On this subject many complaints and lamentations have been made to me. I have been written and spoken to especially in reference to the facility with which members dispense themselves from coming to our Feasts, regarding them undoubtedly as Works of supererogation, and consequently there is not sufficient prayer for the Society, for its progress, for its living members, for those whom it has the misfortune to lose every day; and if these complaints are well founded, I conjure you all, in the most impressive way, to put forth all your efforts to prevent a recurrence of these things in future.

This punctual and intelligent observance of the

rule will, therefore, be a valuable means of constantly raising the level of the christian spirit amongst us. But what will also powerfully contribute to this object, is the introduction into your Conference of a large and truly Catholic spirit — this will be a very efficacious medium of attaining the proposed end. I shall explain myself in a few words.

It is unquestionably an excellent thing that every brother should love his Conference; it is still better if he loves his Conference and the entire Society, and this enlarging of the feelings and affections cannot but promote the progress of the Conferences in which this spirit is developed; but would it not be perfection if each one loved his Conference, the Society, and all the charitable or christian Works which co-operate in developing the church. Would it not be so, if each member, instead of limiting his horizon to the visitation and relief of some poor persons, extended it to all the great interests of faith — if he rejoiced in all the conquests and all the conversions achieved by religion, if he sympathized with its sorrows, and lived that truly Catholic life which makes a good christian, from one end of the earth to the other, exult or be afflicted at the sight of the triumphs, or of the trials of the immaculate Spouse of Christ? For then one would impart into the most insignificant Works, into the most minute details large, generous, and fruitful views; instead of looking at the petty and unfortunately personal, local, or narrow sides of questions, one would view them through the comprehensive ideas

of faith, and become more and more accustomed to see in good nothing but the good itself, in the Works only the Works themselves, and to root out from oneself by incessant labour whatever savoured of personal interest, selfishness, and cold egotism.

The Christian spirit, on being elevated in our souls will consequently vivify the Conferences themselves; but what a vivifying influence will it not, thereby, impart to our Works and to our poor — the object of it! It a Conference is cold, composed of timid and hesitating Christians, it will never relieve its poor except with a constant anxiety about failing funds, and getting into debt. It will be brought to a standstill before the slightest obstacle that may present itself in the visitations of the poor, in the patronage of children, in the library, and it will become dried up through this very timidity. But, on the other hand, let this Conference, without more funds or a larger staff, comprise ardent Christians, endowed with a generous and exalted spirit, and immediately the state of things will be altered. There will be no longer any fear of doing too much; no longer any doubt except as to not doing enough. If there is no money, a scheme will be devised to procure it, and the members will begin by drawing on their own pockets, even though it should cost them meritorious sacrifices and real privations; this done, they will courageously commence to solicit the alms of others. In their intercourse with the poor they will not be disconcerted by the numerous checks they meet with, and they

will prosecute with perseverance the siege of their souls, in order to subject them to truth and God, after having freed them from the vices and prejudices which alienated them from that allegiance. In their conduct towards children, who are often so unsteady and so easily led away through their very giddiness, they will not be put out, if they do not at once convert them into serious and very christian beings; but they will devote themselves in such a way to these children, they will return so amiably to the charge, that at length their intractable natures will yield, their rebellious characters will assume form, and the love of God will penetrate into these souls which are made for Him, and which it is so good to bring back to Him, in a word. Into all the other Works, Libraries, Holy Families, Christian Doctrine, there will be infused a fresh sap, a vigourous spirit, and through that fact alone that one is a *Catholic* in the full sense of the word, in the entire extent of the expression, shall one be a member of Saint Vincent de Paul, a model man useful in all things, in small as well as great.

But then, to what extent shall not our poor, our children, our *protégés* see the Christian level raised in their own souls? We often lament that families, after having been relieved by us for a length of time, are as far removed as ever from sentiments of piety and faith. But the active Conferences, such as I have been describing — Conferences which I would desire so much to see multiplied, will in the long run make their poor, or their working men more seriously Christian;

they will develop in their hearts, hitherto cold and insensible, that love of God, which it is so consoling to find amongst the desinherited of this world, and which stamps upon their misery a character of dignity so remarkable and interesting; they will restore amongst us, where they have disappeared, those classes of generous Catholics who think before everything, of God, of their soul, of eternity, who love the Church as their dear Mother, and who set about bringing back to her all those who have strayed from her, and upon whom they can exert any influence. Thus, between the visitor and the visited, between the members and their *protégés,* there will be established a community of faith — a kind of spiritual kindred, which will be valuable to all; to our members, because it will reanimate in them attachment to our Work, which procures for them these sweet delights of charity; to our poor above all, because it will bring them more relief and consolations than could be bestowed by the richest alms; and, at least within the circle of our Works, the ideal of Catholic life will be held in honour and re-established.

Accept, etc.

Ad. Baudon,
President General.

Paris, 1st january 1882.

Sir and dear Brother,

Last year, I thought it my duty to discuss with the Paris Conferences the necessity of developing amongst them the work of the Catechisms, and although these Conferences may be circumstanced somewhat differently from some to be met with in other places, I think it may be useful to revert to this subject in a general way. From one reason or another, it is becoming more and more urgent almost everywhere to make our holy religion known and loved. Here, new laws are enacted that trammel instruction in Christian truth sometimes a little, and sometimes very much; there, objections every day more diffused and more perfidiously set forth, propagate doubt in simple and artless souls, and threaten the reign of scepticism where faith before was supreme. More than ever, therefore, in the educated and learned, as well as in the labouring classes, it is important that religion should be studied and comprehended; otherwise our modern generations run the risk of knowing everything except that which is most important to man, that is man himself, his origin, future, and eternal destiny.

In presence of such a danger shall we remain indifferent, Sir and dear Brother? I cannot think so, and I am convinced that this fact fills your mind so much, that it will be very useful to express our ideas on this subject to each other.

The first reflection that occurs to me, and which is considered very practical by men of experience, is that if the study of religion is desirable for all, it is especially so for the intelligent and studious classes. Consequently, our members, who are almost exclusively of this category, ought to ask themselves if they have studied their religion sufficiently to be acquainted with the victorious answers which, for eighteen centuries, have been given to errors which are always the same although under different forms; if they are in a position to defend their convictions, not only before college companions, but even before the numerous poor who, in consequence of readings and of conversations with enemies of the Faith, have learned to put captious objections, against which good sense is not always a sufficient guarantee. I do not fear to declare frankly, Sir and dear Brother, that, on this point, all, or almost all have progress to make, studies to continue or resume, truths to be explained by our masters in the Faith, and one of the first things that I think should be laid down as a principle is, that if we wish our poor should be properly instructed in their religion, we ought to impose upon ourselves this most essential and salutary task of studying the great basis of the Faith more and more. For, how often do we not see good Christians who formerly learned their Catechism most carefully, and even attended learned religious courses, and who, in the midst of business, pleasure and the thousand distractions of the present life, have forgotten certain fundamental principles of Christian teaching and conse-

quently have fallen into errors of doctrine or conduct, without doubt, involuntary, but fatal to themselves and to others?

We therefore have everything to gain in this respect; permit me to repeat to you the advice, long years ago, given us by a venerable priest at one of the general meetings of Paris. "You wish", said he, "to do spiritual good to your poor; begin by doing it to yourselves, by reading books of doctrine and solid piety. You will perhaps tell me that you have not time, that you are engaged in business, that you have an office and that in the evening you require a little rest and family life. Vain pretexts, gentlemen; I do not ask you to bury yourselves in folio volumes, like Benedictines; but I propose your having a book of serious reading which an enlightened priest will point out to you, either a book of doctrine, like M. A. Nicolas, a history refuting the prejudices propagated against the Church, the clergy, or the Popes, or any other book of solid piety. In your office or counting house, you have probably five minutes leisure now and again. Instead of reading a romance or newspaper then, read this good book during those five minutes, and at the end of the year your theological science will insensibly become greater, instead of being extinguished in frivolity and indifference".

What good would there not be accomplished in souls, Sir and dear Brother, if this advice of simple good sense were practised conscientiously by each of us; if, instead of wasting our spare moments in reading periodicals or books, to say the least,

frivolous, we fed our minds with reading, solid, regular and suited to our wants! A great magistrate, it is said, composed a work, whilst waiting for his wife every day, at dinner. We are not like Daguesseau, occupied in writing huge books; but what fine works should we not read in three months, if we devoted one quarter of an hour to this study every day, and what a weight of doctrine would we not bring into the struggles by which we have to defend our religious convictions!

I hope, therefore, that my first observation will be well received; therefore I pass on to a second, that of the utility of instruction in religious truth, and especially in the Catechism for our poor and their children.

Evidently, almost all grown men, in the popular classes, would in these days require to begin over again the study of the Catechism, because the material occupations of life have made them not only forget the letter, but the spirit of it. Nevertheless, it is but rarely that we can approach the subject of this instruction and make it acceptable in the full extent to men who have left the school benches, and it is necessary to guard against offending this susceptibility. Consequently, it would be imprudent to clash with this prejudice, and not to confine ourselves, at least in the beginning, to amicable conversations, instead of giving advice which might not be acceptable. What numberless opportunities, too, occur of themselves; the sickness of a poor man or of a neighbour, the book that he is reading and on which he is bent to question us! Perhaps, some are too timid on this

head, and have to reproach themselves for not making, as so many adversaries of our faith do, the individual propagandism when the occasion presents itself, instead of avoiding it through human respect. But with the children it is easier to proceed in a more expeditious manner. For, as we go to see them, as we chat with them, reward their efforts at school, is it not quite easy to ascertain by a familiar question, if they have read their Catechism, understood, remembered it, and consequenly if they know the first elements of their religion. A vast field is spread out before us here, and a mode of action which will besides have the advantage of giving interest to our visits, and of preventing them from appearing monotonous and fatiguing. If therefore, up to this, we have not thus comprehended and realized our visits to the poor, we ought to endeavour to do so. Very great good will result from it in every point of view.

Greater progress than this is necessary for other Conferences. For instance, could not those Conferences place a select staff at the disposal of the parish priests, in the first place, to teach the Catechism to children to whom it can no longer be taught in the public schools; and then, if the ecclesiastical authorities allow it, to add some very simple explanations to it, as well instructed and Christian mothers of families do?

This is not a new work among us, but rather the re-establishment of an old one, which is not costly, but which, if continued with constancy, may produce the most abundant fruits of grace.

Who knows, in fact, if but for this, many children for their entire lives, will not be deprived of the Christian instructions which they ought to get, and left destitute of the knowledge necessary for their salvation? Who can be certain that, outside this work, families will supply the deficiency about to be made in other respects in religious education, and hence, what a benefit will it not be to maintain the faith in entire populations? In country districts where this want is felt most, how many brothers are there who complain of a want of food for their zeal? And what better resolution can the members take than devote themselves to this rôle of voluntary catechists, which, of course, cannot be done without the authority of the clergy, but which the Church has always encouraged, in analogous circumstances?

I shall now conclude, Sir and dear Brother, in order not to weary you, and to leave you to meditate at your leisure on this interesting question. Generous efforts are evidently required from you, especially where the religious instruction of numerous children is proposed to your zeal; but which of you, at his last moments, will not congratulate himself for having made this effort and given to our Mother, the Church, this proof of devotion?

Believe, etc...

Ad. Baudon.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT GENERAL

13th december, 1890.

Gentlemen and dear Brothers,

You have read in the *Bulletin* the rescript by which our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, adding to the numberless favours which, following the example of the Sovereign Pontiffs, his predecessors, he deigned to bestow on the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, has graciously granted various Plenary and Partial Indulgences to the Members of the Patronage Committees connected with our Society, and to the young men, apprentices, and workmen enrolled in those works.

It is now time to examine closely the provisions of the Pontifical Rescript, and to ensure the execution thereof.

From the very beginning of our Society, our Brothers have always felt a lively attraction for the Work of the Patronage of Boys. This inclination was even so marked that, in certain towns, the Brothers went so far as to devote themselves too exclusively to this Work, and to the detriment of the visitation of the poor, so that M. Gossin, in his Circular, dated the 2nd July, 1845, thought it right to claim for this visitation the name of "Fundamental Work" of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

This pre-occupation would not be allowable

now-a-days. On the one hand, indeed, during the last half century, the labouring population of towns has been greatly increased, and the number of lads who can work out their salvation only with the help of associations of preservation and perseverance, has grown considerably; on the other hand, too many Conferences have, for reasons of various kinds, taken too little interest in those Works, as if the protection of boys, scholars, apprentices, and workingmen was not the natural outcome of the visitation of the poor, or as if a Conference would not decrease in relying on other associations for the care of training Christian generations of labourers, and of finding the funds required for the support of institutions whereof the good effects compensate liberally for the sacrifices they entail.

Therefore, in order to point out the importance of the Patronage Work, and to incite the Conferences to devote more time and more funds to it, the Council-General thought it well to solicit humbly the encouragement of the Holy See, so that the spiritual favours generously granted by the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII, might become a proof of the solicitude of the Church for this portion of the Lord's vineyard which we are called on to cultivate.

Heretofore the Patronages of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul had no share whatever in the treasury of the Indulgences at the disposal of the Church. This void had been noticed by directors of works for the working classes, and the inference therefrom was that at eighteen years of age a

young workman should leave the Patronage to have himself admitted into some other associations, provided with all the spiritual favours required for the development of Christian life. Was it not misunderstanding the difficulties of preserving the Faith amongst young workmen, to try thus to establish classifications and allow young men arrived at the critical age of their life to give up the protection of those who had brought them up and trained them in virtue, so as to place themselves under some other guide? This notion was too much opposed to good sense to succeed, for the essential matter at the most dangerous time of youth is that the man, either priest or layman, who succeeded through his own devotedness in winning the confidence of a youth, should keep him near himself, in order to aid him in this transit where so many hopes and promises are wrecked. The objection which was raised is about to be removed, for now the Patronages connected with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul will enjoy all the spiritual advantages to which they could aspire, and that, without any limit as to age, the terms of the Rescript being applicable alike to workingmen and to apprentices.

The Papal Rescript also purports settling the position occupied in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul by the Directors, and the Managing Committees of the Patronages connected with the Society. Heretofore, the Council-General conferred Aggregation only on Conferences and thus, neither the Directors nor Counsellors of the Work were

Members of the Society unless they belonged either to one of its Councils, or to a Conference, It sometimes happened that the Council-General were requested to aggregate a Conference taking charge solely of the Patronage work, which perplexed them. There will be no longer any difficulty of this kind in future; for, on application of the Directors and Committees, the Council-General will be able to declare "the union" of the Patronage to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and thus enable the Directors and Members of Managing Committees, as well as those patronized, to share in all the spiritual favours which the Society possesses.

I. — Thus, just like the Conferences, the Directors of Patronages and their co-operators, whether active or honorary, can gain, on the usual conditions, a Plenary Indulgence on the day of their "reception into the Work," and it will be the same for apprentices and workmen "received according to rule." These expressions are to be understood, not merely with regard to their individual reception, but, as for the Conferences, their reception in a body, which is the outcome of "the union" with the Society pronounced by the Council-General.

With respect to the Indulgences to be gained in the course of the year, some difference is to be observed. The two festivals of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of Saint Vincent de Paul have been appointed for the Conferences; the two others are the day of the patronal feast of the Work, regularly fixed in each

diocese by the Ordinary, and that of the feast of the Patronage of Saint Joseph.

Just as in the case of the Conference, a Plenary Indulgence is granted in the *Article of Death* to all the Members of the Work, and also to their relatives of the first degree, and furthermore, to the Benefactors of the Work, who, having the necessary dispositions, will invoke devoutly the Holy Name of Jesus by word, or at least in their mind.

Finally, the Directors of Patronages and the co-operators are admitted to gain a Plenary Indulgence four times in the year on the days fixed by the Ordinary, once for all, if, having on the aforesaid days fulfilled the usual conditions required, they have attended in the course of the year three times a month the meetings of the Council of the Work. This provision of the Rescript, dated the 15th March, 1890, differs a little, as you see, from the similar provision contained in the Brief dated the 10th January, 1845, concerning the Conferences. The Patronage Committees will have the right of soliciting the appointment of the four days on which these indulgences may be gained.

II. —As for the Conferences, an Indulgence of *seven years and seven quarantines* may be gained by the associates : —1. Every time they shall assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass celebrated for one of them. 2. Every time they shall accompany the mortal remains of their associates to the grave by reciting a few prayers. 3. And also every time they shall attend the meetings which it is customary to hold in the month by adding some prayer at the beginning and end.

Finally, all these indulgences, and each one in particular, are declared applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

By this summary you see, gentlemen and dear Brothers, that most of the spiritual advantages long since enjoyed by the Conferences have been extended to the Patronages which will be bound to us. May thanks for this be returned to God and to the Sovereign Pontiff, so gloriously reigning.

It now remains for us to examine in what way the Patronages will be admitted to benefit by these favours, and what conditions they will have to fulfil for this purpose.

I. — A preliminary condition will be that the Work have a certain standing. The Council-General will not exact that the Patronage be installed in suitable and special premises; nevertheless, an installation made with a view to its operation, and having required heavy sacrifices, will be necessarily considered as a guarantee of the stability of the Work and of the value attached to it by its founders. But this condition will not be indispensable. Wherever the funds are inadequate for the renting or the purchase of suitable premises, an efficient Work of Patronage may, however, be made by encouraging the regular attendance of children and apprentices at the devotions of the Church, and by taking charge of them there; by organizing them into little confraternities; by teaching them in the evenings or on Sundays. If, for the carrying out of these various works, our Brothers should constitute com-

mittees—holding meetings at fixed times, celebrating regularly the festivals of the Society, holding general meetings for the reading of statements and the distribution of premiums, nothing would hinder the Council-General from bestowing on these various works of preservation and of perseverance the title of Patronage and from admitting them with this name into the Society.

II.—The second condition will be that the Work shall have existed a certain length of time : for the Conferences the Council-General usually imposes a trial of two months; for a Patronage it will be prudent to prolong the delay, and extend it to six months.

III.—The application for admission into the Society must be addressed to the Council-General in the same form as for a Conference. You are acquainted, my dear Brothers, with our traditions, and you know that when a second Conference is about to be started in a town, it, through respect, informs the senior Conference of the fact : likewise an application for admission made by a Patronage should, unless in exceptional circumstances, be addressed to the Council-General by the Conferences of the town if there is only one, and accompanied with its opinion. If there are several Conferences bound together by one Particular Council, it is this Council which should forward the application, passing it, through the intermediaries of the Central and of the Superior Councils. If there is no Conference in the place where the Patronage is established, the application for admission should be sent to the Council, who will

forward it either to the Superior Council, or directly to the Council-General with its advice.

IV. — At the present moment, among many Patronages more or less closely united to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, there is a fairly large number of them which have been started by priests or by religious not belonging to our Society. Admission into the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul will not necessarily entail placing the Directors of those Patronages in subordinate position with regard to the Conferences or the Councils of the various ranks, the position of each Patronage with respect to the Conference or Conferences resulting from arrangements peculiar to each kind. Nevertheless, the Council-General desires that, wherever it is possible, each Patronage whose admission will be applied for should be provided with a protecting Committee formed of Members of Conferences, and whose support will be a valuable guarantee for the Work. If any of our Brothers would like to be conversant with the *rôle* these Committees are called to fulfil, we invite them to read the Rules adopted unanimously by the Congregation of the Brothers of Saint Vincent de Paul and the Council of Paris for the management and administration of those of our Patronages which this pious and charitable congregation directs in that city.

The different prescriptions and recommendations we have just enumerated are repeated in the forms which the Council-General has recently had printed, and which it holds at the disposal of the Conférences.

Let us set to work without further delay, Gentlemen and dear Brothers, and let us strive to bring forth from the munificent act granted us by the Sovereign Pontiff fresh sources of selfdenial and of generosity. May we be able, in the humble and simple sphere which our Society occupies, to labour efficaciously to dispel formidable misunderstandings by training up Christian generations of workingmen, and, by the light of Divine Charity, prepare the way for the reign of peace and of justice.

A. Pagès.

28th april, 1895.

Gentlemen and dear Brothers,

The President-General of the Society had formerly the habit of writing to the Conferences for the purpose of giving them a few friendly recommendations, and these pleasant conversations, in which my venerable predecessors excelled, are not the least of the attractions afforded by the perusal of the Manual. Even now, if any person wants to know the Society of St. Vincent de Paul well, he cannot do better than read again and again those precious Circular Letters in which the life of the Conferences is so well described, and where the difficulties and dangers are pointed out with

so much wisdom and candour. Time has not altered the correctness of this picture, where our impartiality finds again all the imperfections which even at the present day impede our progress and the development of the Conferences.

When we reflect on the causes which for the past sixty-two years have saved the Society of St. Vincent de Paul from the dislike of the faithful and the inconstancy of its own Members, when we seek for the motives of its extension which outward events and the distrust of Governments may, indeed, check, but do not succeed in putting a stop to, we are led to admit that safety and—why not say it here?—success have come to us by means of our humility, and the care we have everywhere taken not to court congratulations or praises, and to keep ourselves in the background as much as possible, so as to attribute to Almighty God all the merit of the few good works we have succeeded in doing. And it happened, occasionally, that we needed some firmness to withstand certain inducements, and that strong current which inclines the men of the present day to seek for support in the publicity of the newspapers.

Do we continue to observe with the same fidelity this humility, which was so well practised by the Founders of our Society, and by its first Members? Has there not gradually arisen a certain tendency to cast it aside? For instance, in one place we see a Brother who, not being sufficiently impressed with the intentions of our Society, and adopting the customs of the world, writes on his visiting cards the office he holds in our Society.

Elsewhere we are advised to announce, through the medium of the *Bulletin*, that some Members of the Society have received, some a decoration, others a distinction of nobility. We wish those Brothers will kindly spare us, henceforward, the pain of replying to these suggestions by a direct refusal. In other instances, it is the Reports which dwell complacently at length on this subject. We are glad, assuredly, to hear that the Sovereign Pontiff or the Governments have recognised the merit of our Brothers, but what we cannot admit is that our *Bulletin* or Reports, intended to be the "Annals of Charity," should be used as a means of gratifying our self-love.

Another thing which still threatens the ruin of our traditions for humility and simplicity is the habit, becoming more and more repeated, of pronouncing discourses "on behalf of the Conferences" over the graves of our deceased Brothers. Whenever we hear of this abuse, we hasten to protest against it, but without succeeding in making ourselves sufficiently heard. Shall we then be obliged to write on the first page of the *Bulletin* a positive prohibition to speak thus in public in the name of the Society? No doubt our Brothers are afraid of failing in the respect due to the family of the deceased Member in observing silence; they must, however, have the courage to be above this consideration; the family will not wonder at our reticence if it knows the customs of our Society; later on, when the right time comes for speaking of the deceased Member, we shall, without being exposed to cherish any secret

thought of personal praise in this oration, recall in a just measure the services rendered to the cause of religion and of charity. It has sometimes happened, however, that Bishops have ascended the pulpit, and in the presence of the mortal remains of one of our Brothers, have preached the panegyric of his zeal and his merits; we did not think ourselves free to dispense ourselves from speaking of it, and from reproducing the discourses of prelates, because the words of a bishop are truly an instruction and should always be brought prominently forward; it is also customary to announce in the *Bulletin* in a few lines the death of the Members of the Council-General, but these communications, discreetly meant for our Brothers, have nothing in common with the funeral orations delivered on behalf of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul over the graves of deceased Members, for whose souls the smallest prayer would be a hundred times of more advantage.

There is a second danger to which the growing extension of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul exposes us, namely, the diminution of the spirit of reciprocal kindness and cordiality which constituted the attraction of our first reunions. It frequently happens that a Conference is founded without any of its Members having formerly belonged to the Society, and without being well informed of its origin and object. The "Society" appears then to those new Brothers no longer as simply an assemblage of men, animated with the sympathy and affection which the similarity of feelings and tastes gives us—a sympathy and

affection which caused people to say of the early Christians "See how they love one another," but as a vast administrative organization. Hence, we now find in the correspondence, at one time, the forms of expression which public officials use among themselves, with their cold politeness and studied tone; at other times, the commercial or business style; but we would seek in vain for a word from the heart. Is it thus that Christians should inform each other of their good works! Oh! how different they are, alike in thought and expression, from those friendly and affectionate communications which were exchanged between our early Members! The Manual recommends us to collect our thoughts for a moment before opening the door of the dwellings of our poor, and to ask Almighty God to bless our charitable ministrations. In like manner, let us, my dear Brothers, take care when we write to one another, to reflect for a moment on the communications we are about to exchange with one another. Let us leave aside those commonplace and conventional forms of expression, so as to keep that simple and friendly style in our letters of which our Founders set us the example. The day on which we would adopt new methods of procedure and a formal tone, a change would be wrought in the Society as deplorable as it would be dangerous. The coldness of our expressions would soon be equalled by the coldness of our feelings.

What would our early Members say if they attended a meeting of one of those Conferences where the Members come and take their places

beside one another without exchanging the slightest friendly salutation, without showing the least civility; and if they saw two Christians who the day before were seated beside each other at one of our reunions, meeting in the street and turning away their head with an air of indifference? Doubtless, people will say familiarity has its dangers, and that a certain reserve is proper. I do not deny this fact; but is it, then, so very difficult to combine Christian prudence, which should never forsake us, with the care of behaving graciously and kindly in everything?

"Cordiality," said St. Vincent de Paul, "is a joyfulness we feel in our heart when we see a person we love; it is gushing of the heart by which we show we are glad to be with a brother; it is a fruit of Divine love united with that of our neighbour. If charity were a red apple, cordiality would be the colour of it."

"That which from the beginning of our Society," wrote M. Baudon on the 14th April, 1848, "constituted the innocent strength and the vitality of our Conferences was the amiable cordiality which never ceased to prevail between their Members, the simplicity of their meetings, the frank expressions of friendship, and, what I would here venture to call, the pious fellowship of charity. That is what used to people the Conferences. . . . . But if cordial affection was the principle of the development of our Society, it ought to be the secret of its continuance. Besides, it is not enough to love one another. Member for Member, as the rule says; we must, moreover, love

one another from Conference to Conference, from town to town, from country to country."

M. Baudon might have added, if his humility permitted him, that it is to the winning and impressive charm of our correspondence that is due the unhoped-for liking for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in countries we have never had the opportunity of visiting, but which, however, have let themselves from afar be won over to our cause.

It was also M. Baudon who wrote as follows on the 1st November, 1856:—"In order to maintain cordiality it is necessary that when a Member enters a Conference the President should become better acquainted with him than by a short and formal introduction made at the meeting. It is also necessary that this Member should be presented to the other Members of the Conference. In some few Conferences, where there is a large attendance, the new Members enter it without being known, so to speak, without their fellow-members knowing even their names. This is a great evil, because those Members do not become at all attached to their Conference. They feel isolated and unknown in it, and they imagine, perhaps, they are not wanted, and too often retire either through disgust or from weariness."

These observations have lost none of their value after a period of forty years, they have even become more correct and more worthy of our attention. Yes, by the very fact of the extension of our Society it happens that the ties of cordiality and intimacy have been rather relaxed among

us; we are tending more and more to resemble, if we do not take care, those immense armies which lack cohesion because the combatants do not know one another sufficiently; many Conferences are injured by the coldness the Members evince towards one another, but this indifference is felt above all from one Conference to another. No doubt, in a large city like Paris, it is hard for Conferences situated at long distances from one another to become acquainted and keep up a constant intercourse, but it should be otherwise in the case of Conferences situated in the same district, which ought to try to have frequent intercourse with one another, and to become more united by the bonds of charity. In that way their scope and field of action will become wider. We should no longer see the spirit of routine creeping gradually into Conferences belonging sometimes to the wealthiest quarters, which remain in a dangerous isolation; their Members in ignorance of what is taking place in the midst of the Society. We should also come to our General Meetings, which are too much neglected, and our Pilgrimages, which are too poorly attended, to strengthen our feelings of affection and of mutual sympathy; it is the expression of those sentiments that will give rise to the generous impulses which prepare the way for the extension of our beloved Society, which has still a vast field to bring under cultivation, because coldness and indifference are of necessity barren.

Cordiality is the outward manifestation of love of our neighbour; when cordiality is absent it is

to be feared that its principle is likewise lacking. What is the evil that is eating into modern society? it is selfishness, the inevitable companion of seeking after comfort and pleasure. Let us, my dear Brothers, escape the general contagion; I wish I could affirm that such is the case, but I am not without having some doubts on this subject. Let us have, at least, the merit of trying to struggle against this pernicious influence. In the efforts we make to solve the social question we clash sometimes with the too often unreasonable demands of the workingman, but we also find an obstacle in the selfishness of the rich. We have, my dear Brother, an important rôle to fill in this great work of peace-making in which Leo XIII. invites all well-disposed men to take part, but let us be well convinced that, in order to succeed with the working man, we must begin by overcoming ourselves. In order to make our words of pacification and of mutual sacrifices acceptable we must preach by example. But how far we are, alas! ourselves, from having the state of mind that we would wish to communicate to our fellow-men! What a painful spectacle the world in the midst of which we live presents to us in its blind pursuit of earthly enjoyments and of comfort, in those selfish calculations where it shows nothing but indifference and contempt for its neighbour! Oh! how much we need to improve ourselves, and to establish a league of mutual confidence and attachment between ourselves before descending into this arena of burning competition!

"Human Society is founded," wrote a certain Moralist, some short time ago, "on the mutual giving or the self-sacrifice of one man to another, or of each man to all men, and sacrifice is the essence of every true society. This is what we have forgotten for the past century, and if we must go again to school, it is to learn this fact over again. A well-bred man is one who puts himself to inconvenience, or who restrains himself in order to serve others." You will allow me to change, somewhat, this quotation, as I am not obliged to consider here what constitutes a "well-bred man," and to tell you that the Brother of St. Vincent de Paul who is truly worthy of this name, is he who sacrifices and devotes himself for others, and it is not a single act of self-sacrifice and devotedness that is expected from us, but the constant self-denial and devotedness that have become a habit with us. That should be, my dear Brothers, the only way in which we ought to try to distinguish ourselves from those around us, looking for no other reward here below than the satisfaction of having fulfilled our duty as Christians, and having honoured our Faith.

A. Pagès.

16th april, 1899.

Gentlemen and dear Brothers,

When it was the duty of Messrs. Bailly and Gossin to inform our predecessors of the progress and the interests of the Society, their custom was to send out general notices in the form of circular letters and these instructions in which the object and the character of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are so clearly explained, have become the justly authorized exposition of our Rule.

By degrees, under the long and fruitful presidency of my revered predecessor, it became an established custom to take the opportunity afforded by our general meetings to deal with those questions, and the "addresses" published in the *Bulletin* have taken the place of the circular letters. The subjects which are introduced at those meetings do not seem to relate always directly to the Works which are more especially represented at our meetings in Paris. They are the better, however, of being discussed in the presence of so competent an assembly as this, and in addressing the whole Society throughout the world, we are more reassured when we feel ourselves in full agreement with you.

I would like to-day to speak with you for a few moments concerning Conferences established in colleges and other educational establishments. From the beginning the "Board of Direction,"

which soon became the "Council-General," showed how much it valued the establishment of those Conferences. One of its most distinguished Members, Augustin Cochin, was appointed to draw up a special instruction under the title of "Advice on the Formation of Conferences in Houses of Education."

By degrees those Conferences have been multiplied, and more than one diocese could be cited where all the houses of Christian education of any importance are provided with them. No person any longer denies, at least in principle, the services that a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul is calculated to render as the complement of the education given in colleges, and gradually the opposition remaining seems likely to give way.

It is not from the desire I have to see these obstacles disappear that I am going to speak to you to-day. I am supposing that Little Seminaries and Catholic Colleges are all provided with Conferences, and I ask myself whether, judging by what we learn here to-day, the results obtained will be worthy of the end in view, and of our own hopes.

In some respects I will answer yes. The good influence exercised by the Conferences on the pupils belonging to them cannot be denied. Some few abuses, no doubt, may have crept into their working. For instance, the selection of candidates for admission as Members may not have been made as carefully as we could wish, and a few heedless boys have been able to abuse the privilege of going out, so as to enjoy an amount of

liberty not intended. In other places it is the masters appointed to accompany the pupils who have not been, perhaps, as prudent and careful as they ought to be, and blame was thrown on the Conference itself for the shortcomings of its Members or of its directors; but, beyond those exceptions, which are, besides, very rare, all masters who have to do with youths agree in admitting that a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul is of invaluable help in the great work of education; that it contributes greatly to the progress of the Faith, the safeguarding of morals, the training of minds, and also the rectitude of judgment : *Super exaltat misericordia judicium,* wrote the Apostle St James.

However, do the Conferences in colleges and Little Seminaries bear all the fruit we should be entitled to expect from them, in addition to the aid they give to education, and the piety which they invite their Members to practise? How does it happen that such a large number of our juvenile "Aspirants," instead of getting themselves admitted into the Conferences in full working order, go away from us when they leave college? It would naturally be expected, that after having been zealous Members in the midst of their fellow-students, giving their heart, with all its charitable exertions, to the poor, they would look forward joyfully to the time when they could enter the large Conferences. There is no lack of Conferences for young men in the towns to which they frequently repair to complete their studies, university towns especially, where they would certainly form desirable friendships : how then does it happen that

many go astray in this passage from the college to their life as university students, without any other associations gaining them either?

This "flight" or "leakage," as our English and American Brothers say in their practical way of speaking, arises from various causes, a few of which we have already looked into. We have on former occasions warmly urged our Brothers in large towns or cities to found, side by side with the parochial Conferences, Conferences for young men, which the latter may enter during their transition between the college Conferences and those formed of Brothers of mature age, and thus remove difficulties arising from diversity of habits and want of agreement in disposition. That done, we shall meet with other obstacles still on our way.

Every institution has its own methods and discipline. The *personnel* of the masters charged with education varies according to their intellectual and moral cast, and also according to the nature of the country, the character of its inhabitants, and its prevailing customs. In some institutions there are no traditions, properly speaking; one director has ideas differing from those of his predecessor in office, and sometimes discontinues things which had been established by his predecessor. In order to avoid mixing up the Society of St. Vincent de Paul with matters of discipline, which are very delicate, the Council-General has always allowed a wider latitude in the interpretation of our Rule and usages to the directors of Conferences in houses of education, being careful

only to direct attention to the principal points of our Rule; but a regrettable diversity is the result of this latitude, and to see the working of some of these little associations an observer, not previously forewarned, could hardly recognize in one of them a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul.

Meanwhile, our Society is "one." The various divisions of which it is formed should contribute to the harmony of its action. If the Conferences of "Aspirant Members" (that is the name which the Rule gives to college Conferences) are not managed according to the provisions of the Manual, if they despise the traditions of our Society, they cannot be imbued with its spirit: their Members form habits which they find very hard to undo later on; they will feel themselves quite at sea in the Conferences in full working order to which they will be admitted, and very often they will only pass through them without taking any interest in them or becoming attached to them.

What then is a college Conference? Is it merely "a pious pastime," which each director is to shape to his own fashion, as a relief to the monotony of the studies; one would be tempted to think so on seeing the difference between their usages. In vain, then, have the Founders of our Society left us a Rule, the wisdom of which persons of the best authority have lauded unceasingly for the past sixty years. Many directors think to do better by giving way to the temptation so common, in France especially, of introducing novelties, and of framing a special Rule for their own individual Conferences. In one place the collection is altered

to a "fixed subscription;" in another the chief fund consists in the product of the "fines" incurred by the Brothers for infringing the Rules, as if we wanted to make constraint take the place of the spirit of generosity and of sacrifice. If there is one truth which seems, at the present day, beyond dispute, it is that the visitation of the poor is a work most productive of graces of every kind for the youthful college student, as well as for a man. On condition that some precautions shall be taken, and that a young man shall not be conducted to houses where he will meet with young girls, this visitation is made without difficulty in the most destitute quarters of our large cities: what then is our astonishment to hear that in such or such a small town the director considered there was danger to morals in this visitation, or that going out was a cause of distraction from study, and that he suppressed the visits to the poor! Others again will make our juvenile Brothers, whose habit it was, in drawing up a report, to write simply a summary of their works, compose dissertations on them, in which affectation and a certain desire to shine will, of necessity, appear. Lastly, others would like to regulate even the smallest details, instead of allowing these young Brothers to take upon themselves, and go through the apprenticeship of "self-government," their attention merely being called, when required, to the recommendations contained in the Manual. How would youthful Members, who are thus trained in a manner not in accordance with our traditions, acquire a knowledge and love of a Society

of which they have thus caught a glimpse under a false light? The difference they find on going into our large Conferences "disconcerts" them, and this reason alone, not to speak of the numberless temptations which arise in their path, would be a hindrance to their perseverance.

Nowadays there is great discussion about the education of the young, from a "social" point of view. In many institutions they try to teach the students of Philosophy the elementary notions of a science which they shall afterwards have to study thoroughly, and the principles of which are to serve them as rules in their career in life. It is to be hoped that from these studies there will spring up, together with a well-regulated plan of living, a generous inclination to contribute to the welfare of society, and to the improvement of the working classes. Ah, well! the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has, this long time, taken its place beside this study of social science; it is not even presumptuous to say that it has been before it as a practical school of charity, and that perhaps it is destined to outlive it: however, it will remain for it an indispensable adjunct: *Plenitudo legis dilectio.*

But if the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has thus become, by the grace of God and the happy inspiration of its youthful Founders, the practical school of charity, which has been extended throughout the whole of Christendom, it is of the highest importance to avoid, at the beginning of that teaching by example, faults and errors. It is sometimes said of a pupil that his education has

been a failure because he was "badly taught in the beginning." You have also heard it said more than once that it is more difficult to train a soldier, whether infantry or cavalry, who has received incorrect notions before entering the service, than it is to train one who is totally ignorant of military duty. Forgive me, my dear Brothers, if there is anything trivial in these comparisons, because they express my thoughts so well. An ancient sage, being asked "what boys must learn," replied : "What they ought to do when they will be men." The advancement of a Brother of St. Vincent de Paul in his career of charity will often depend on the excellence of the beginning he makes, and on the care taken in guiding aright his first steps.

Do we wish to take for guides the Sovereign Pontiffs and the exhortations which our illustrious Pope Leo XIII, following the example of his august predecessors, has been pleased to address to us so often, or do we feel a generous ambition to labour by good example for the restoration of Christian society? If so, it is necessary, from the outset, that we should be strongly imbued with the spirit and traditions of the Society to which we have the honour to belong. You have, perhaps, found some of my criticisms a little too severe? My excuse is the earnest desire I feel, with you, to see the Society of St. Vincent de Paul grow at once in extend and in strength. It is not by a somewhat incongruous union, but by a complete cohesion, aided by a good system, that we shall acquire the confidence which should guide us

through difficulties, and the energy which will ensure the success of our efforts.

A. Pagès.

15th December 1900.

My dear Brothers,

Just when the present year is drawing to a close, there is no person who does not pause to think for a moment on this Century which will end in a few days, and on the other about to begin. Men and nations question one another, and those, too, whom Fortune seems to have blessed with her riches, are not free from anxiety concerning the coming years. The conquest of war or the triumphs of diplomacy may dazzle a country for a while, but they cannot protect it against the danger of social upheavals and revolutions, which is daily becoming more widespread; nor against internal quarrels, the struggling of class against class, and the perpetual menace of conflicts which sometimes give rise to more hatred and misfortune than the war of nation against nation. Happy are those who, in the midst of so many causes for uneasiness and care put their trust in God and desire no other ideal but that of a wise freedom, together with the reign of justice and charity.

The century about to close has a special claim on our attention, on our gratitude, I might say; because it is the century which gave birth to the

Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the one during which our Society succeeded, through the grace of God, in extending its branches into almost every Christian nation in communion with the Holy and Apostolic See. To this century belong those grand Christians whose names I have no need to repeat here, and whose zeal, sustained by the ardour of their faith, was able to give an impetus to the expansion of our Society which the inevitable effect of time has slackened, perhaps, while at the same time bringing it under discipline, but which, I am sure you will admit, is not yet near its end. To be convinced of this fact, we need only examine the reports which reach us from the most distant lands, as well as from our old Europe; those applications for affiliation to our Society which come to us every year like a fresh spring-tide, and those ingenious inventions of charity which some members of enterprising spirit sometimes attempt of their own accord, but which we are glad to commend and promote as soon as we see the advantages and profit that can be derived from them for the labouring classes and the poor.

Let us return thanks to God, who raised up such brave defenders of His cause in a century marked by burning struggles, and who provided, in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, an instrument of edification and sanctification for men unknown to the preceding generations, or which, at most, could only have presented itself to their minds as a possibility for the future.

Two years ago, at a meeting like the present, I endeavoured to enlighten you on the state of our

Society at that time, particularly with respect to France, where new Works, the outcome of unflagging charity, are springing up incessantly to excite the emulation of those of earlier date; and I pointed out to you that in spite of obstacles, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul had been spreading without interruption. I could undoubtedly say the same thing again to-day, but I think it better, instead of dwelling on the motives we have for returning thanks to our Sovereign Lord, to look calmly at the difficulties which beset us in this period of transition, and to consider the means by which we can overcome them.

I shall not attempt to characterize the society in the midst of which we are living, remembering as I do that the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul were not formed for these lofty speculations, and that it is not for us to constitute ourselves judges of the errors or abuses that we witness. By simply looking at what is usually called "the Catholic movement" around us and the world of labour, we are struck by the agitation we see there, the multiplicity of measures and methods resorted to, and we ask ourselves who will be able to unite firmly and discipline all those forces. It is not without some apprehension that we see so many men and youths expending their zeal and vigour in discussing either orally or by their pen, the dangers that society is incurring and the remedy which ought to heal its evils, while so many of our Works, our Patronages in particular, as well as the Clubs attached to them, are suffering from the want of sufficient Brothers to take charge of them

and manage them, and to exercise a practical and truly effective mission towards the working boys and men under our care. Assuredly it is of great importance to devote ourselves to the spreading of well-doing, and to foster in the ranks of Christian society the spirit of association which promotes the feeling of self-reliance. But in order that associations may prosper and bear fruit, it is necessary that they should make themselves known by their works: *ut videant opera nostra bona.* And when those Works have grown it is certainly fitting that the persons who are charged with securing their progress should give earnest attention to maintaining their spirit and fixing their rules. And yet a few members are sufficient to fulfil the duties of management, and it is of importance that the majority of them should be freed from the details of administration and discipline, so that they may assiduously look after the carrying out of the Works, and, to use a common expression, "put their shoulder to the wheel." An association having only writers and speakers at its helm, no matter how eloquent they might be, would give but imperfect results, and would soon become disunited owing to the disagreements which the unavoidable friction of men in their intercourse with one another brings forth of necessity.

On casting a glance around us we cannot refrain from making a comparison with the period, also one of great agitation, when the Society of St. Vincent de Paul sprang into existence. The "Society of the Good Studies" was formed of a large number of young men who had received a

Christian education and were earnestly striving after good, and yet, the heated discussions, and even the misuse occasionally of the literary debates, soon caused a division, disputes, and a certain weariness, as it were, among the members. Ozanam tells us that he and his fellow-students, feeling the discomfort of those contentions, sought a remedy for them in that Association of Charity which has become the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and which was so well suited to the aspirations of Christian souls, that after a few months about one hundred young men joined its founders. And is it not so to-day as it was then, that it is in our ranks and in the bosom of the Conferences that the members come to breathe an atmosphere of peace and harmony from which all contentions vanish, and in which asperities of character are softened.

No person, to our knowledge, disputes the advantages just referred to; but sometimes an objection is raised that we make a selfish use of them, and are not anxious enough to turn them to the profit of our less fortunate brethren. It is admitted that we practise somewhat zealously the visitation of the poor at their homes, but they say our tickets for bread or meat are old-fashioned, representing a form of relief which is but a mere mitigation given to the sufferings of hunger and destitution, but which is powerless to heal the evil. There is no really effective assistance, those persons assert, except "assistance by employment."

We have no intention of questioning the advan-

tages of that kind of assistance. To procure work or employment, with fair remuneration, for a man out of employment, is indeed rendering him a greater service than to give him bread tickets or to contribute by premiums towards the payment of his rent. Accordingly, our Brothers, when they meet a workingman out of employment, endeavour to obtain work for him. Neither could we do better than to procure where necessary for the families we assist the special advantages to which the workshops organised by Associations of Relief by giving Work entitle workmen out of employment. But we can easily understand that the number of those Associations will always be of necessity limited, and that if they did happen to become numerous, the competition which they would cause with the ordinary workman in consequence of over-production, would soon give rise to violent recriminations, and the remedy might thus become worse than the evil.

And besides, the families we visit do not, as a rule, suffer much through want of employment. With the help we bring to them and by our visits, they are likely to be lifted above absolute want, and in their cases the want of employment is nearly always brought about by those inevitable fluctuations of trade and commerce, which it is hard, if not utterly impossible, to prevent. Our ordinary task is not to procure work for the great majority of the families we relieve, but to aid the old and infirm, to give assistance where the families are large, where the mother's time is taken up with the cares of her children and her dwelling,

and also, above all else, to see that the children are taught their religion and their duties to God, the "bread-ticket" being the passport, as our predecessors have so often repeated, which opens the doors of those dwellings, so worthy of our attention, and enables us to acquire little by little the influence over the father of the family which we earnestly desire to exercise for his greater good.

There is one form of assistance by work that we are sometimes accused of not valuing sufficiently, viz., giving plots of ground to labouring men to cultivate as gardens. We have not been the last to recognise the advantages of this Work; many Conferences carry it on and the Council-General never fail to encourage it. But in this instance, too, it is quite evident many of the families we help are not fit to cultivate a garden, nor to find suitable profit by doing so. It would be of very little use to offer to poor people living in the centre of a crowded city, a piece of ground situated a long way off, at which they could not work except by breaking the Third Commandment; so by wishing to generalise the very best ideas, we run the risk of compromising their success.

But there is one point on which it would be easier to take us to task. For a long time past, men who have nothing to live on but the work of their hands, have a tendency to band themselves into associations for mutual aid, syndicates for protection and co-operation. Unfortunately, the opponents of our holy religion have been the first to foresee the strength that can be derived

from combinations of thad kind, and we are sorry to see those whose boyhood and youth we once protected letting themselves be tempted by the material advantages those associations offer them, and thus putting themselves under the guidance of men who are hostile to our creed. What, my dear Brothers, have we done up to the present to procure for the workingmen under our care these material advantages in societies actuated by correct ideas, which these poor men imprudently seek for in other societies? Is it not a fact that our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII. is constantly inviting us to give more attention and care to the amelioration of the temporal needs of our families and to their future? If you read over again the reports and communications of every kind of our Society, you will assuredly admit that, in obedience to the directions of the Sovereign Pontiff, we have not ceased exhorting you to take up this work boldly, with the conviction that in order to preserve the faith of our less fortunate fellowmen, or to lead them back to it, it is absolutely necessary to show them the benefits of association, and make them see that those who speak with them of God are likewise those who know best how to direct them in the search of the temporal advantages of this world and to protect them against the dangers and trials to which the life of the workman is exposed. It is agreed by everyone that the century about to begin is destined to bring about great progress in works of that class, unless demoralisation should hinder it. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul must join in these hopes in order to

assure for them a Christian direction, and in this employment of its activity its members will find ample scope for the exercise of their energy, and material for development in abundance; if it stood aside to carry out merely the spiritual portion of its work, it might well be feared that some of its members would ultimately leave it and devote their energy to works of more immediate interest and more suited to the needs of the present day.

For the success of their labours there is, however, one condition which changes not with fashion or with the evolution of ideas. It is this—that societies prosper by the faith and piety of their members. If the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has grown and spread, and if God has been pleased with its humble works, it is because the charity and humility of its members have always rested on the foundation of their piety. When we see associations disturbed by the spirit of contention and dispute, others seized with languor and declining zeal, and when we behold some Conferences giving way to discouragement and likely to fall away, we say to ourselves, "piety is wanted there"; because faith and piety know no failures. And for the century about to dawn, as well as for the one just at an end, it is not learned combinations, carefully elaborated constitutions, however praiseworthy they may ortherwise be, nor is it even the value and just reputation of systems that are needed to ensure the success of associations; piety and the love of God will still be the life and the salt of our works.

A. Pagès.

21st April, 1901.

Gentlemen and dear Brothers,

Among the recommendations bequeathed to us by our venerated predecessors, there is one of unquestionable importance—it is to read over our rules every year, and this reading should not be done merely by each member individually and in private on his own account. It is fitting they should be read during some of the meetings, in order to ascertain whether the prescriptions of the rules are strictly followed, and whether the traditions left us by the founders of our Society and their early disciples are still held in honour amongst us.

When we go through this little code of rules which ought to guide us, as well as protect us from falling into lukewarmness and carelessness, we quickly perceive that the recommandations prescribed by its fifty-nine articles are very unequally observed. Usually, the members willingly attend the meetings of their Conference, discharging this duty with more or less of punctuality and earnestness. Except in a few cases, which are to be regretted, and against which my predecessors and myself have always protested, the members visit as regularly as they can the families adopted by the Conference. We think, too, that our Brothers comply liberally with the precept of almsgiving, although sometimes the product of the bag collections seems, in our opinion, rather small.

But when we come to Chapter IV, which treats of the "General Meetings," we are sorry to say that this portion of our Rules seems to be unknown by many members, and that among those who do know it, a large number of them disregard it without any scruple.

Let us go back in thought, my dear Brothers, to the early days of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. At the end of two years, when the Conference had become inconveniently large, our Brothers were compelled to separate, some of the members of the first Conference, that of St. Etienne du Mont, going out in parties, founded the Conferences of St. Sulpice and St. Philippe du Roule. But this separation was not effected without grief and apprehension. They were sorry to see loosened the sweet ties of that Christian intimacy which they had enjoyed from the beginning, and they also feared that the dispersion might ultimately interfere with the unity of their views and sentiments. They promised to meet one another as often as possible, and, as the Rule was then being drawn up, they were careful to introduce into it as a precept the holding of General Meetings. It was decided that they should meet four times a year, and that on the mornings of those meetings they should hear Mass together for the intention either of the Society, or its deceased members.

To-day, after sixty-five years, would it not be somewhat rash to say that these four festivals are faithfully observed by the generality of our Brothers? They are, no doubt, sincerely attached to their Conference and the poor they visit, and they

consider it right that their Conference should contribute its share to the expenses of the Society at large; but the line is drawn there, is it not, for a good many of our members? To strive to bring within their view a wider field, to look at the advance of the Society as a whole, the object which it proposes to itself, the ideal at which it ought to aim, the progress to be realized, the influence of supernatural motives on its action—these are things for which those Brothers seem to have little care, judging by their indifference to the prescriptions of the Rule designed to assure the advance of the Society, to preserve it in the paths marked out for it by our founders, and at the same time to make it share in the progress which human activity obliges us to realize in the domain of works, as well as in that of the sciences.

Do we sufficiently take into account the danger that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul would run if each member in every Conference ended by confining himself to the strict limit of his own individual work, taking no interest in anything pertaining to the central administration and action, forgetful of the classic story of the "Dispute between the members and the stomach"? If the Conferences were to exist isolated and indifferent to any other care than that of their own immediate interests, and be thus deprived of the advantages, both spiritual and temporal, which insure union and combined action, they would soon languish and ultimately disappear altogether.

It will be said, perhaps, that the Conferences have more than one means of keeping in commu-

nication with the centre of the Society; and that the *Bulletin* keeps them informed of all important events and maintains zeal everywhere. We are all the more willing to admit the importance of the *Bulletin* and its good influence over the progress of the Society, because we are constantly urging the Conferences to read and diffuse it, the Press having become, in the opinion of all, the most effective means of propagandism; but who will suggest the subjects that should be dealt with in the *Bulletin;* who will help towards its compilation? Where will the Council-General, who have the management of this publication, look for such suggestions for it? Is it in the Conferences? Far be it from us, assuredly, to question the importance of the inner work which is accomplished, sometimes in an unconscious way, in the interior life of the Conferences; but it is, above all, in the bosom of our General Meetings we see that generous fermentation which maintains life in our Society. How many Conferences are almost inert through routine, and end occasionally by being lost to the Society, which would have remained energetic and prosperous if they had faithfully observed the Rules, and if at the times appointed by the Rule, or at least at some of them, they had thought of seriously examining their conscience, studying practically the means of action at their command, the perfecting of their works, and also the new ones to be undertaken, so as to meet the new wants which are constantly rising up in the movement of feverish unrest with which modern society is being hurried along!

The objection may be raised that in the country, and in many small towns, the life of the Conferences is not sufficiently vigorous for them to have aspirations like those just referred to, and that it is wiser for them to adhere simply to the practice of our ordinary works. We willingly admit this in the case of an isolated Conference, situated too far from others to be able to join with them for the purpose of holding General Meetings in common. But that is an additional reason for endeavouring to connect the Conferences of the same part of the country, so that those that think they could not hold General Meetings unaided, may unite with the larger Conferences for that purpose; that is one of the principal reasons for extending the establishment of Particular Councils to rural Conferences, which are thereby given an effective support.

But what are we to think of the Conferences that, without having any valid reasons, neglect this provision of our Rules? And what shall we say of those of our Brothers who, for the sole purpose of going to some wretched amusement, dispense themselves, seemingly without the least scruple of conscience, from attending the General Meetings which are often held within a few yards of their dwellings? Must we name a few towns where hardly one-tenth of the members assist at the Masses said for the Society, and at the meetings which have held afterwards? What has become of the fervour with which the early members of the Society used to approach the Altar on the four appointed festivals, so as to obtain the

plenary indulgence which may be gained on these occasions? It is asserted, however, and we do not contradict it, that in many places and in many respects the piety of the faithful is growing, and is manifested to the edification of others; but it would seem each one yields to the inspiration of the moment, and that things are carried on without method or system. Is it not there that we must look for the cause of so many failures? Happily this evil is not widespread in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a proof of which we find, to quote no other examples, in the reports sent us from the United States of America, which inform us of meetings where there are upwards of 1,000 members present, and where the vigour and fervour of the early days of our Society reign.

We could not too carefully meditate on our Rule and the Papal Briefs approving its articles by granting Partial or Plenary Indulgences for the performance of each of our duties as Brothers of St. Vincent de Paul. There is a whole chapter of the Rule devoted to the subject of General Meetings; and each of these meetings, with the Mass said before it, affords us an opportunity of gaining a Plenary Indulgence. The Briefs refer constantly to this favour, which in different degrees serves to crown the work of our Pilgrimages and Spiritual Retreats. Who will bring back the large attendances of former times to our General Meetings in the places where they are now neglected? It is on the Presidents of Councils and Conferences that the duty more strictly devolves of reminding members of this essential part of our Rule, and of ur-

ging them to observe it faithfully. Do they send out the invitations so that they may reach our Brothers in time? Do they seize a favourable opportunity of pressing it on the attention of those members who are too exclusively engrossed with the interests of the families they visit, sometimes, too, with worldly distractions! That is an important duty for our Presidents to fulfil, and their devotion to the Society may be seen by the zeal that they show in this matter.

And, moreover, is it not the best way to promote the progress of our Society to hear Mass and pray in common on our Feast Days, to prove ourselves worthy of the favours the Sovereign Pontiffs have deigned to grant us, and to show our gratitude for them; and is it not also procuring for those at the head of the various degrees of our hierarchy the support they need to fulfil their mission and to overcome any obstacles that may block their road? For, what is more consoling, in the midst of difficulties and contradictions, than to feel ourselves surrounded and upheld by an assemblage of Christians all animated with the same feeling, the love of God and of their neighbour!

A. Pagès.

PRINCIPAL WORKS OF THE SOCIETY

Special instructions have, through the care of the Council General, been published with reference to the principal works undertaken by the Society in addition to the visitation of the poor. It will be sufficient to give a brief enumeration of them here.

Christian Schools.

The education of the children of the working class occupies a place in the first rank of these works. Through a great part of the country the school has been secularised and instruction in the truths of Christianity is now banned. Everywhere the Conferences have given their attention to the foundation of Christian schools. In many countries, such as England and the United States, the Conferences have themselves established Sunday-schools for poor children. Our brothers of Smyrna and Beyrouth also support schools at their own expense.

In France "Catechism Schools" have been established for children of the public schools brought up in ignorance of our Holy Religion. These schools are under the direction of the parochial clergy.

Among apprentices and workmen there are many who, before they had received an adequate instruction, religious, moral or intellectual, have been

sent to earn their bread by manual labour. They would earnestly avail themselves of any opportunity of obtaining instruction at the hours which succeed the close of their daily toil. To supply their wants, the society has opened in many towns night schools for working boys and adults.

Patronages, boys'clubs, working boys'homes, placing out bureaus, probation work (1).

The most important Patronages comprise sections for *scholars, apprentices,* and *workmen,* which generally meet at different hours. One or more Chaplains are charged with the spiritual direction. The President and members of the Council have the care of the selection and contracts of apprenticeship. The Patronage gives part of its time to recreation and amusements ; but a place is always reserved for religious instruction.

Patronages are also established in the Country, on the initiative of either the Clergy or the Conferences. The latter co-operate in the work either by contributions, or by the personal assistance of the members.

The Conferences also practice the Patronage of Scholars, by visiting schools under the direction of Christian Masters, by paying the school-fees for a number of children, by sending them marks, anb by distributing prizes.

The placing out bureaus and the probation work

1. The Manual for Urban Patronages may be had at the offices of the Society, post free. 40c. And the Manual for Rural Patronages and Circles, post free, 70c.

are particularly developed in America, where they have been established in the interest of the young, especially those children, who are deprived of the care of parents or are otherwise homeless and friendless, also those who are brought before the courts for misdemeanours and other violations of law.

Holy Families (1).

This title is applied to those pious assemblages which are held, either on Sunday at the hour of service, or during the week. The meetings are attended by workmen who have been enrolled. Besides Mass, Vespers, or Benediction, the programme of the gatherings includes a short address by a lay speaker. A tombola is drawn by lot, and *Short Readings* or almanacks are distributed. Sometimes a medical doctor gives free consultation. A "Holy Family" is the natural complement of a Conference in large towns.

Secretaryships for Families.

The poor find there, once or twice a week, members of Conferences who place themselves at their disposal either for writing their letters or for making personal applications to find employment or some work, or for giving them useful informations and even advice on business matters.

1. The Manual of the Work of the Holy Family may be had at the offices of the Secretary, post free, 25c., and the notices to assist its establishment, post free, 15c.

The work of the Marriages (1).

Following the example of the Charitable Society of Saint Francis Regis, which has anticipated us, the Conferences have joined in the work of rehabilitating illicit connections, and have been compelled, at the same time, to prevent the evil of concubinage, by assisting the poor to fulfil the formalities of marriage. In great cities such as Paris several Conferences combine to organise à Committee and supply it with the resources, generally very modest, that it requires. The Committee of Marriages nearly always undertakes the office of Secretaryships for Families.

Economical ovens (2).

This name is applied to the ovens or kitchens where the food for the use of the families of the workmen are prepared. Meals are paid for by means of gifts which charitable persons distribute to the poor in the course of their visits, or when alms are solicited. Each oven has its own administration and places its orders as it may, so that receipts and expenditure may balance. Many, however, have to receive subventions from Conferences or Particular Councils. At most of the

1. A guide for "The Work of the Marriages" may be had at the office of the Secretary, post free, 35c.

2. A guide for the *Economical ovens* may be had at the offices of the Society; post free, 15c.

ovens a Sister of Charity presides at the distribution; but one of the members of the work should be present at the opening and recite a short prayer before the serving begins.

Many conferences supply with the mid-day meal poor school boys who live far from the school or who would find nobody at home, because theirs parents have gone to their work.

Fresh air work.

That work which is very flourishing and popular in America, is destined to give during the vacations a few wecks' free outings to poor city children. Under the care of Sisters, the little ones are made as happy as possible, receive as much religious training as the time affords, and are helpfully encouraged in the practice of those virtues tending to uplift them morally and physically and to make them feel the advantages, both to soul and body, which the sojourn at the Home is permitting.

Libraries.

Many parishes are provided with libraries, but the rules prescribed for the preservation of the works, impose obligations that it is beyond the power of the poor to fulfil, especially if the books are placed in the hands of their children. Special libraries, are, therefore, needed by the Conferences. Everywhere the distribution of good books ought to accompany gifts of food. The Council

General publishes at 48 deliveries a year a small illustrated journal for the use of workmen, schoolboys, and patronages. It also publishes several cheap almanacks.

Rent banks and penny savings banks.

This name is given to small Savings Banks, intended to help the poor in the payment of their rents. A brother receives every week, at an appointed hour, the saving of the poor, and the Conference pays the depositors an interest considerably higher than that of the public Savings Banks.

Clothing depot.

It is important for each Conference to have a clothing depot to store the clothes which it buys or the food which it distributes in kind. The brother who keeps the clothes-depot, also generally keeps the library and the rent bank. At each meeting of the Conference he presents a report concerning the clothes-depot and of the applications he has received. This control stimulates zeal greatly.

The Clothing Depot may also serve as an office for the *Committee of Marriages* and the *Secretaryships for Families.*

Workmen's gardens.

Since about ten years, that new work has been adopted by many Conferences and from the excel-

lent results it is giving, we may wish that it will be spread more and more in the future. The Conference takes on hire, near the district where its families are living, a field, which is divided into several plots of 200 to 400 square yards according to the nature and the value of the land. Those plots are assigned to families that undertake to cultivate them carefully, to eat the fruits the land will yield, to observe the rule ordering to rest on Sunday, and to practise Christian charity towards their neighbours. It has been superabundantly proved by experience that it is possible to abstain from working on Sunday and nevertheless to get good and fine vegetables, thanks to the cooperation of all the members of the family : wife, children, old people. Touching facts are related every year about the mutual help that is given by those who cultivate neighbouring plots. The visits of our brothers take a special character of cordiality, when all the members are assembled out of doors and working. Let us add that Conferences, that only dispose of limited funds, have succeeded in establishing workmen's gardens without increasing their expenses, because the families never object to give up their weekly tickets during the summer. The vegetables indeed, they are gathering in, are several times worth the tickets, besides the joy, the health, the rest which the children and the parents may derive from the possession of a little plot of land. It is true to say that the workmen's gardens are the kind of relief that will do the greatest deal of good for a given sum, because the sacrifice laid on the Conference is

multiplied by the personal labour of the relieved families.

Sailors' homes or Seamen's havens.

That work has been organised with great success by the Society in important English, American and Australian sea ports. The brothers go on board all the vessels entering the port and inquire about catholic sailors. They place themselves at their disposal for all that they may be wanting, try to remain in touch with them during their staying in the harbour and give them the address of the Home, the hours of the masses in the neighbouring parishes or in the Home private chapel, etc. The Home is established in rooms near the port, and is open daily to seamen of all nations. They find there the advice and informations they may require as well as moral and spiritual help. They may have their letters written ; and the chaplain and the brothers distribute them prayer books, scapularies, beads, bundles of papers and magazines, pipes, etc. Concerts are given in the Home, a dinner is sometimes served at Christmas, and a mission is preached in Lent.

VISITATION OF THE SICK AT THEIR HOUSES AND IN HOSPITALS

These two works have a special organisation in many towns. At Turin, especially, the patients in

the hospitals are the object of the particular care of our brothers. The visit is paid during the day at an hour fixed by the rules of the Work.

Visitation of prisons and religious instruction of prisoners.

From the beginning of the Society, its members have devoted themselves to visiting prisoners and labouring for their moral improvement. In America the prison authorities afford every desirable facility to the Conferences, and a great number of brothers go to instruct those detained whom they endeavour to lead back to good.

Funerals of the poor.

In no more touching way can we show our affection for the poor than by accompanying to their last resting place those whom we have assisted during life and who have died with the consolations of religion. This work of interest and respect is, at the same time, the best protest against those "civil" burials organised by impious sects. In many Conferences a member is charged with despatching to his brothers the invitations.

Note. A Manual or Special Notice for most of these works may be had from the Secretary of the Society.

THE END.

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